

A GEOPOLITICAL ANALYSIS OF U.S.  
ALLIANCE BUILDING WITHIN THE MIDDLE EAST

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(ABSTRACT)

The concept of geopolitics is reconsidered as a viable framework in analyzing the power relationships between nation states and then applied to the Middle East.

After reviewing the historical development of geopolitics, it is modified, and then set against alternative approaches in explaining Middle Eastern alliances. Ultimately, geopolitics is used in order to rationalize America's alliance network within the region.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents, and who from childhood on taught me the importance of scholarship. If it had not been for their value of higher education, which they passed on to me, it is very doubtful that I would now be on the verge of obtaining a Masters degree. I am also going to thank my seventh grade social studies teacher, who impressed upon me the importance of politics and geography, allowing me to have a clearer vision of the world. Finally, I would like to thank my committee members Rhys Payne, Bill Ochsenwald, and Tim Luke for not only bearing with me these last months, but also for agreeing to be on my committee in the first place. Its not often one gets all of one's first picks. It truly has been a pleasure and honor in getting those professors to work with me on my thesis whose classes and teaching style I have respected, admired, and enjoyed not only as a graduate student, but also as an undergraduate student at Virginia Tech.

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## FOREWORD:

In today's world, political scientists are asked to explain and rationalize the ongoings of the political world. Yet there seems no consensus to explain the power relations between the world's states and the policies they form. It appears that whatever framework is proposed, there emerges a critic to attack the effectiveness of such an approach. In response to this point, this thesis will suggest that geopolitics be re-examined as a framework for analyzing the world's politics. Like any other framework used before it or after it geopolitics has had its problems. It originally failed because its supporters (ranging from its originators such as Mackinder to the Nazis) changed it from an approach explaining political relationships between the world's states into a rhetoric of propaganda attempting to justify the actions of their respective state. It would seem that if political scientists could escape their own chauvinism they would see in this framework an explanation of the political reality of today. Simply stated, geopolitics sets the parameters within which foreign policy decisions are made. A nation's geographical location, natural and human resources, and economic needs determine its political objectives. If used correctly, geopolitics could then become quite useful in predicting how states act and react to political happenings around them. The thesis of this paper is that geopolitics will provide a more rational way of explaining United States foreign policy in the Middle East than any other factor. In order to do this, the paper will not only discuss American policy but also those of the other political actors taking part

in Middle Eastern politics, including the Soviets, the Europeans and the Japanese, as well as the Middle Eastern countries themselves.

Often major alternative approaches to the geopolitical approach in analyzing the American foreign policy in the Middle East are the political ideological approach (which refers to the ideological conflict between democracy and authoritarianism), and the cultural approach [which refers to the religious conflict between Jews and Christians and Muslims and also the ethnic conflict between Arabs vs. the non-Arabs (Turks and Indo-Aryans)]. Throughout this paper, the ideological approach will only refer to the democracy/authoritarian ideological conflict. The ideological approach implies that the U.S. sides with the Israelis in regional disputes against the other Middle Eastern states since both are democracies, while the latter group consists of various authoritarian governments. This approach attributes not only U.S. support for Israel, but also the U.S.S.R.'s support for the Arab states to itself. Disproving this strawman will be rather easy, but it is necessary to do so in order to legitimize geopolitics.

When used in this paper, "cultural divisions", will refer to the distinctions between Western (European, Israeli and American) and Middle Eastern (Arab, Turkish and the Indo-Aryan of the region). The religions of Christianity and Judaism will be referred to as culturally Western and Islam will be described as being Eastern. The reason this will be done is because political scientists believe that the international alliances are formed around culture. This implies that cultural similarities between the U.S. and Israel will bias American policy towards Israel in the Region. Secondly, since the major foes



of the Israelis have been the Arabs, the U.S. will seek the non-Arabs as allies against the Arabs. Surprisingly, the noted geopolitician Saul Cohen tends to agree with the cultural approach of reasoning and attempts to show how the alliances in the Middle East are based on ethnicity, the Arab Muslim world against the non-Arabs (Israel, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, etc.). It will be my goal to show that this is not the case, but that geography and geostrategic resources play the role of the determiners of who sides with United States and who sides with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Many feel that the United States' close ties with Israel are because of the large Jewish community within the United States. If this is so, then this would give credibility to foreign policy formed on cultural bias. It will be shown that other reasons exist for America's close ties with Israel.

In order to reevaluate geopolitics as an approach to understanding world politics, the paper will not only have to take into consideration other notions of American foreign policy such as cultural and ideological divisions as the basis of foreign alliances, but will attempt to develop a dynamic explanation within the framework of geopolitics to show why the alliances are changing and what influences these changes. While geography is quite stable, other factors within a nation's geopolitical situation are dynamic, such as population and technology. Changes in these change geopolitical relationships. First, an introduction to geopolitics and its various stages of evolution is in order.

Note: Mercator world maps are used in this paper since they are proportionally biased towards northern areas of the world. This bias is appropriate since it reflects the superior economic and military power the northern hemisphere enjoys over the southern hemisphere.

## CHAPTER I

### GEOPOLITICS REVISITED

#### 1.1 Geopolitical History and the Theme of Containment within its Origins.

The history of geopolitics, if one includes Saul Cohen's insight into the past, goes "back into antiquity to Aristotle, who held that their temperate-zone location qualified the Greeks for world domination over northern and southern climate people."<sup>1</sup> This statement of Cohen's, if not technically correct with regard to when geopolitics began, does show us that since ancient time, man has recognized that geography is a key factor in determining political behavior between populations and ultimately nation states. It is the intent of this paper to review present world geopolitical relations and eventually analyse U.S. policies in the Middle East within the framework of geopolitics. "A political scientist interested in international political behavior necessarily seeking for what is most general and timeless, must ask the question, what is general in the behavior of all states?"<sup>2</sup> In a world of international anarchy, foreign policy does aim above all at the improvement or at least the preservation of the relative power

<sup>1</sup>Saul Cohen, Geography and Politics in a World Divided 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp.28-29.

<sup>2</sup>Ciro E. Zoppo and Charles Zorgbide, ed., On Geopolitics, Classical and Nuclear (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1985), "Spykman and Geopolitics," by David Wilkinson, p. 78.

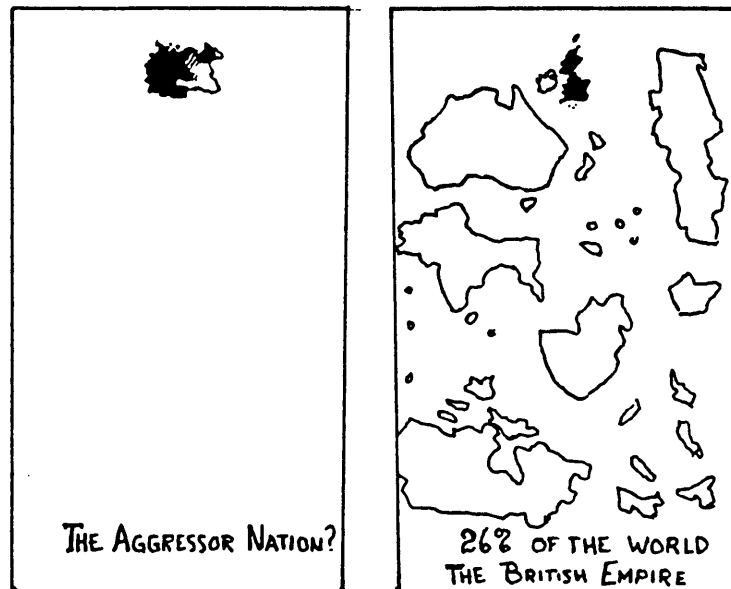
position of the state. Power is in the last instance the ability to wage successful war, and in geography lie the clues to the problems of military and political strategy. The territory of a state is the base from which it operates in time of war and the strategic position which it occupies during the temporary armistice called peace. "Geography is the most fundamental factor in the foreign policy of states because it is the most permanent."<sup>3</sup>

Since the end of WWII, the academic world has shunned geopolitics as a respectable and objective science. This was because of its association with German expansionism on the eve of WWII. Geopolitics began in 19th Century Germany and was used as a device to promote German unity and nationalism by Friederich Ratzel. "It also was used as a "scientific" rationale for German territorial expansion and ultimate hopes for world domination."<sup>4</sup> Map 1 shows an example of how the Germans misused the idea of Geopolitics. The map shows 1942 Germany compared with the 1942 British Empire. Obviously, the sheer number of areas expanded into and conquered in the distant past by the British Empire makes one want to come to the conclusion that Britain was the aggressor state and "little" Germany was the lesser of two evils. However, in fact, Germany had just annexed Czechoslovakia and Poland against the wishes of the lesser states' citizenry and was at that point occupying

<sup>3</sup>Nicholas J. Spykman, America's Strategy in World Politics, the United States and the Balance of Power (Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1970; first published 1942), p.21.

<sup>4</sup>Robert E. Norris and L. Doyd Haring, Political Geography (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1980), p.49.

Map 1, An example of German Geopolitik



Source: Reproduced in Colin S. Grey, The Geopolitics of The Nuclear Era (New York, Crane, Russek & Company, Inc., 1977), p.30. Originally copied from Robert Strausz-Hupe, Geopolitics: The Struggle for Space (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1942), p.121.

France, the Benelux, Norway, Denmark, Yugoslavia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia along with major sections of the Soviet Union. This is not shown on the map. Secondly, the map shows Canada, New Zealand, Australia and South Africa as part of the British Empire. The above mentioned states were independent at that time and the "weary titan" known as the British Empire was following the example of the 19th Century Ottoman Empire, only in grander fashion, in becoming the sick man of not Europe, but of the world. The map effectively distorts Britain into being an aggressor nation and not a declining empire. This

case should show how important history is to geopolitics, for without history, the geographical relationships between states can be misinterpreted.

Secondly, this map shows how German geographers did a major disservice to the use of geopolitics as an effective tool for studying the relationships between nations by tainting it not only with extremely biased conclusions, but also with Nazi propaganda. Most noted of these Nazi geographers was Karl Haushofer.<sup>5</sup> To his credit, however, Haushofer stood firm in his belief that attacking the Soviet Union was a bad idea, and his objectivity was rewarded with a "nice rest" in the Dachau concentration camp in 1944.

Today, geopolitics must confront its legacy from the Nazi past so strongly associated with it, and so damaging to its credibility. Therefore, geopolitics will be divorced from this past: "geopolitics" will henceforth be the term used to describe the approach used to analyze power relationships between states, while "geopolitik" will be used to describe the geographical propaganda of the Nazis.

Geopolitics began with Germany's Friederich Ratzel,<sup>6</sup> In the early part of the twentieth century, Ratzel developed a framework for political analysis which he named political geography.

The two essentials of Ratzel's systematic approach were space (Raum) and location (Lage). Space he regarded as contributing to and being dependent upon the political character of groups occupying this space. Location

<sup>5</sup>For an example of his work see Karl Haushofer, Grenzen in Ihrer Geographischen und Politischen Bedeutung (Berlin: Wowinkel, 1927).

he viewed as giving particular uniqueness to the space occupied by the state.<sup>7</sup>

Among the many "laws" which Ratzel developed, most dealt with space and location. His single most important conception was the idea of the "organic state." Ratzel used Ritter's idea of "organic cultures"<sup>8</sup> to describe an "organic state."<sup>9</sup> He said that a state as an organism has a biological need for growth in order to remain healthy. From Darwin's ideas on the "survival of the fittest," Ratzel maintained that states are involved in an endless struggle for space. All living organisms are in a fight for space, he believed, and the most powerful will have the largest spaces. States with high population density have a more valid claim to empty land than those with a low density. Thus to become politically powerful, people should multiply as rapidly as possible, and take over empty land. People of all states should develop a "space conception" or space consciousness, for "the decay of every state is caused by a declining space conception."<sup>10</sup> Ratzel wrote that the frontier (the skin of the organic state) should not be considered a line, but rather a shifting zone of assimilation. Boundaries should not be permanent features of the landscape but shift with the requirements of the state. "Although Ratzel did not say so, it is obvious that the model he used was the United States with its westward shifting

<sup>6</sup>For more on his work, see Friederich Ratzel, Politische Geographie (Muenchen, Berlin, 1897).

<sup>7</sup>Saul Cohen, Geography and Politics in a World Divided, p.22.

<sup>8</sup>Robert E. Norris and L. Lloyd Harding, Political Geography, pp.51-52.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p.57.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp.51-52.

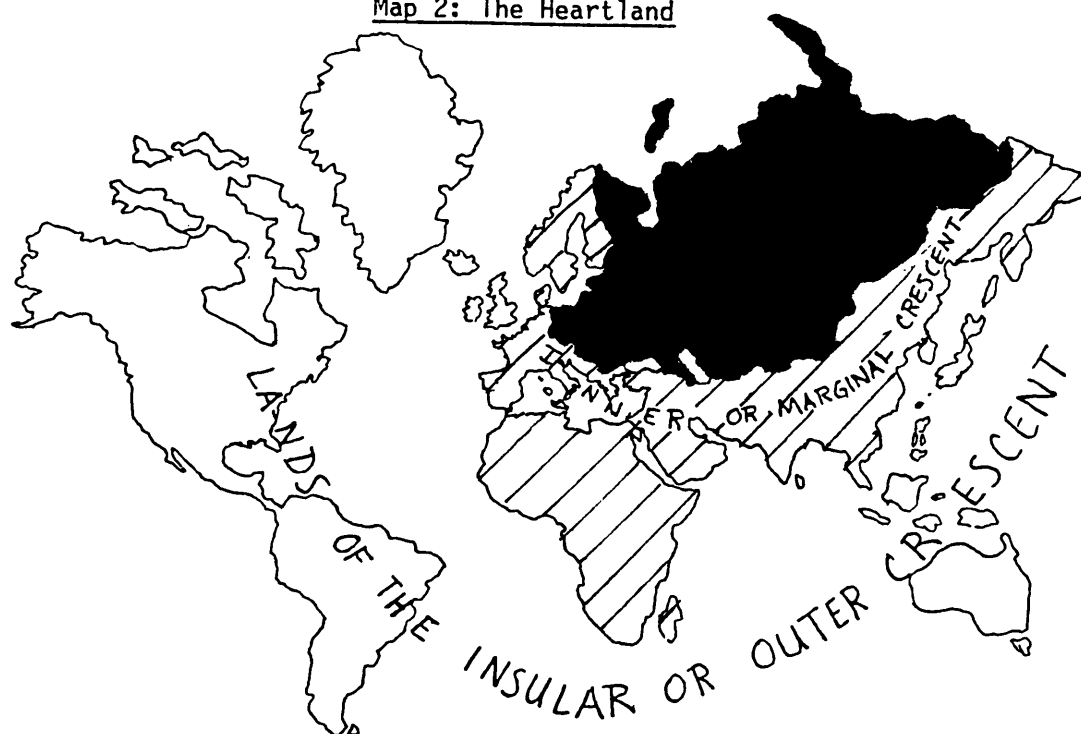
boundary."<sup>11</sup> Or was it so obvious? He could also have been talking about the expanding Russian Empire. Ratzel felt that "large space" states and man's utilization of them would create "great space" states. He felt that eventually these "great space" states such as the United States would eventually come to dominate world politics, reducing European states to minor players in world politics. Eventually, Ratzel felt that "great space" states in North America, Asiatic Russia, South America, and Australia would evolve. This for the most part has not happened, largely because Ratzel forgot his own concept of location, where two of the four above listed areas were in disadvantaged areas (by comparison with the other two) with regard to resources. He took no account of the resource differences, especially technology, the human populations, and the mineral wealth of the different continental masses.

The next great theorist of geopolitics was Sir Halford Mackinder. It was this Englishman that combined the concepts of "great space" with that of location which led to the articulation of the Heartland theory in 1906. The Heartland theory espouses the belief that due to its size and location, a certain region of the Eurasian continent enjoys preeminence in influencing and dominating the other "great spaces" of the world. This pivotal area of Eurasia is known as the Heartland (See map 2). Mackinder warned

that rule of the heart of the world's greatest landmass could become the basis of world domination. Mackinder felt that it was entirely possible for the land power

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp.51-52.

Map 2: The Heartland



■ = THE HEARTLAND

▨ = THE WORLD ISLANDS

that gained control of the pivotal area (be it Russia, Germany, or even China) to outflank the Maritime world.<sup>12</sup>

He became even more explicit when he gave advice in his famous dictum:

Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland

Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Islands

Who rules the World-Islands [World-Islands refers to the union of Eurasia and Africa,] commands the World.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup>Saul Cohen, Geography and Politics in a World Divided, p.42.

<sup>13</sup>Peter J. Taylor, Political Geography, World-Economy, Nation-State and Locality (New York: Longman Group Limited, 1985), p.39.



It was thought by Mackinder that because of their location and the technological revolution occurring at the beginning of the 20th century that those states within the Heartland would gain a military advantage at the expense of the Insular (or maritime) powers. It was widely believed the former would be able to transport their military to areas of conflict more rapidly on the modern railroads than the traditional maritime powers could with their navies on the world's sea routes. Since Mackinder was British, it is understandable that his world vision (Weltanschauung) reflected a fear of the two major Heartland powers of the time, Germany and Russia. His work reflected a fear of a possible Russo-German alliance, and it was so influential that world leaders seemed to follow his advice, when they redrew Europe's boundaries after WWI. In order to prevent a possible Russo-German alliance which would jeopardize the rest of the great powers' world position the leaders at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference created a buffer zone between these two states (before WWI Germany and Russia had a common border). At this time, it can be seen that many politicians began to listen to the policy implications of geopolitics. It was during this time that geopolitik was rising in Germany.

Karl Haushofer developed the concept of Pan regions (see map #3). He felt that three separate Pan regions of the world could coexist, though each would be economically self-sufficient or autarkic. Interestingly enough, each Pan-region (being longitudinally sectioned) includes arctic, temperate and tropical environments. These regions seemingly have no geographic boundaries. The Pan regions were to be centered around Europe, Japan, and North America, and each had its own

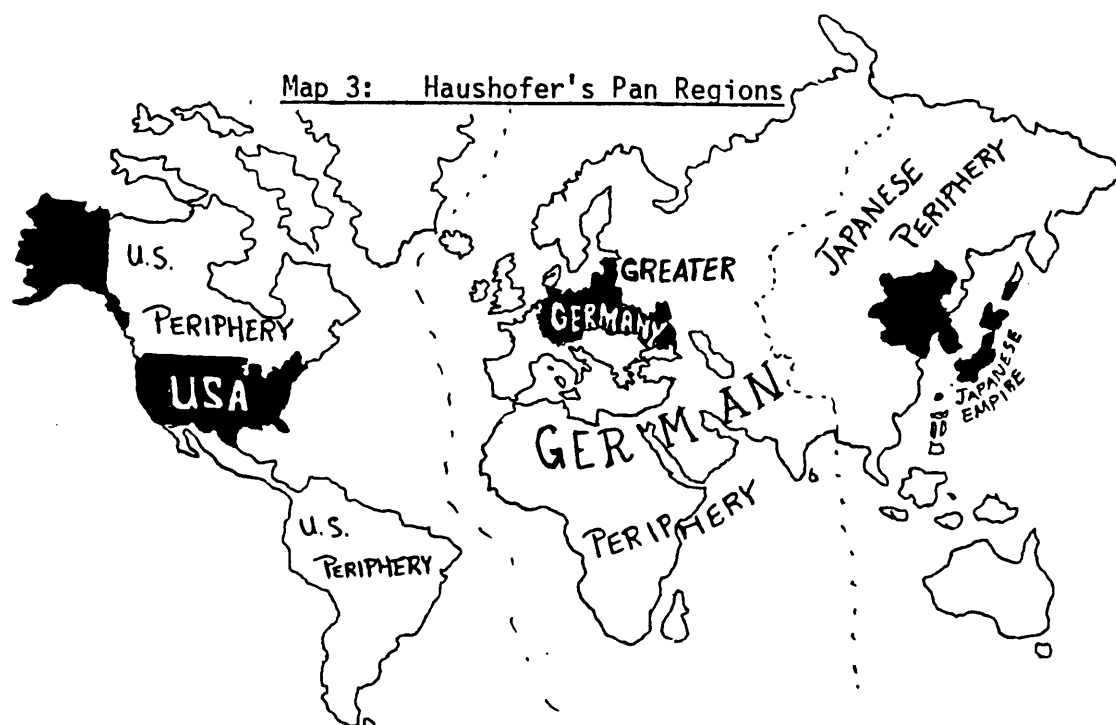
peripheral regions. Europe had Africa, the Middle East and the Indian Subcontinent, Japan had East and South East Asia, and North America had South America. It is clear that Haushofer felt that Germany and the U.S. were to be the core states of their respective regions.

Such a world model of coexistence is no better or worse than other models and may not be too far from the mark with the current demise of the USA dominance of the world-economy.<sup>14</sup>

Despite all of his bias, Haushofer seems to have been on to something. The key to this model is its economic implications (even though Haushofer thought in military terms), for it suggests that those countries with an advanced industrial and technological base would dominate those states within their region that had a lesser degree of economic development and size. If one combines this geographic model with the dependency approach of economic relations between states that was popular during the 1970's, one can see an interesting pattern. Dependency basically holds that those states that had already industrialized by the turn of the 20th Century would use economic imperialism and trade imbalances to strengthen their economic positions at the expense of those states that had not. Wealth, surplus value, and capital are transported from the periphery (less developed) states to the core (more developed) states. At the time of Haushofer, the three mentioned states that were to be the core of their respective Pan regions were the most industrialized of their region, as they still are today.

<sup>14</sup>Peter J. Taylor, Political Geography, World-Economy, Nation-State, and Locality, p.41.

There are two key points that should be made about this model and why it is relevant to the present world economic situation.



First, Ratzel's idea that the state that is closer to a desired territory enjoys a geographical advantage over competitors further away explains why the U.S. enjoys domination over South America, Germany (EEC) over Africa, and Japan over the Far East. Secondly, water routes have been critical for trade. One should note that each of these Pan regions has a large water body within it facilitating exactly such trading. Between Europe and Africa is the Mediterranean, between the U.S. and South America is the Caribbean, and between East Asia and Japan is the Sea of Japan. Cohen attaches great significance to the similarities between the Caribbean and the Mediterranean, even implying similarities between Cuban and Algerian independence as revolutions against the hegemonic powers north of them. Cohen concludes that even

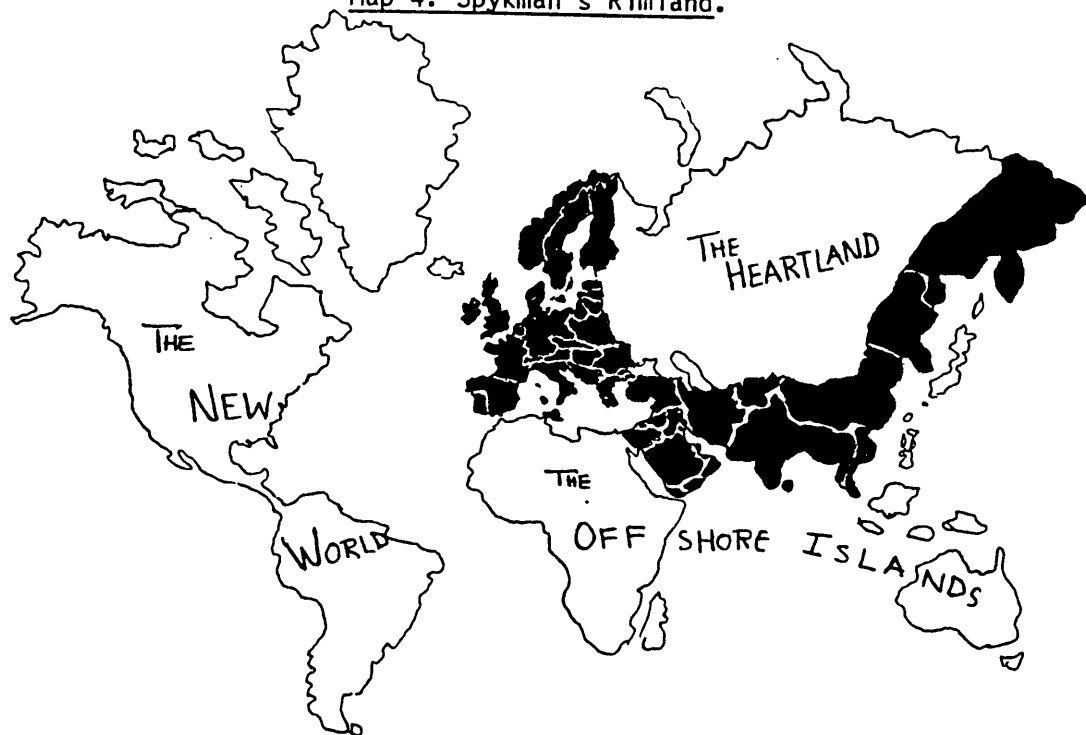
though these states are somewhat free of their former overlords, it remains to be seen if they can sustain their economic independence.


The major fallacy of the three Pan-region argument of Haushofer's is the assumption of autarky between the three regions. However, if one allows competition between the three economic cores, but takes location into consideration, one will find that all three cores extract from each periphery, but that each core enjoys advantages over the other two cores within its respected Pan-region, due to the shorter distance between itself and its periphery.

As a result of World War Two, Germany ceased to be a great Heartland power, and the United States became the major force in containing the new Heartland power, the Soviet Union. It found itself battling against the geographic scenario proposed by Mackinder, known as the Heartland domination of the world. In 1942, the Dutch-American Nicholas Spykman then proposed his Rimland theory of world domination (see map 4, p.15).

Spykman and Mackinder both believed that from time to time certain geopolitical regions became more pivotal and prominent (while others are relegated to temporary oblivion) as a result of shifts in patterns of power. Mackinder had claimed a new and pivotal status for a Russian-East European "Heartland". But Spykman contended that considerations of population size, resource availability, economic achievement, and economic potential all combined to make not the "Heartland" but the "Rimland" — and more especially, peninsular Europe and the coastal Far East — the currently most significant world geopolitical zone. Either of the Rimland's major components,

Map 4: Spykman's Rimland.



 = THE RIMLAND

namely Europe or the Far East (if united by a single power) — and even more certainly a united Europe allied with a united Far East — would stand a better chance of dominating the old world than the already-united Russian Heartland. Noting that the interests of the United States lie in her own independence and security, Spykman therefore concluded that "national interests required the prevention of the unification of either the European or the Far Eastern coastline by any hostile coalition."<sup>15</sup> Spykman's Rimland approach runs parallel with U.S. foreign policy since WWII. There is a strong argument to be made

<sup>15</sup>Ciro E. Zoppo and Charles Zorgbide, eds., On Geopolitics, Classical and Nuclear "Spykman and Geopolitics," by David Wilkinson, p. 79.

that Spykman is not only the founder of the "Rimland theory" but his approach was also the precursor to U.S. containment policy.

While Ratzel and Mackinder are the founders of Heartland-Rimland geopolitics, Saul Cohen is the only geographer attempting to revise the Heartland-Rimland thesis at the present. Cohen points out the poverty of the Heartland-Rimland thesis by noting that the historical approach to geopolitics, indicates that the Maritime powers, whether they be the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Japan, etc., must check the heartland powers whether they be Germany, China, or the Soviet Union by preventing the latter powers' expansion into the Rimland, thus denying the heartland powers access to sea lanes. In reality, this "land-power versus sea-power containment policy can only be seen as locking the stable door after the horse has bolted, given the current naval strength in all oceans."<sup>16</sup> That is, today the U.S.S.R. enjoys naval access to all major bodies of water on the globe. The original goal of keeping the Heartland powers out of the Rimland was to deny the heartland access to Maritime lanes, the economic lifeline of the Maritime powers. This goal of keeping the heartland powers out of the Maritime lanes has not been achieved. It is Saul Cohen who attempts to re-think geopolitics in light of this glaring problem with classical theory in the modern age.

According to Cohen:

the Maritime World has become the victim of myth -  
the myth of the inherent unity of the World-Island,  
given the unity of the Heartland in combination with

<sup>16</sup>Peter J. Taylor, Political Geography, World-Economy, Nation-State, and Locality, p.41.

part of the Rimland. An adjustment of the myth is that the sea-based powers cannot maintain their position unless complete command over all parts of the Eurasian littoral is maintained.<sup>17</sup>

In other words, Cohen is stating that the sea based powers can maintain a certain balance of power with the Heartland without having to keep the Heartland from dominating a section of the Rimland. This radically alters the political implications of geopolitics. Instead of having to keep the Heartland's major power from expanding into any part of the Rimland as the classical theorists felt was necessary (it was assumed that if one part of the Rimland was lost, the other parts would fall, emulating a domino effect), Cohen's revisions suggest that the sea-based powers must prevent the Heartland power from dominating key areas (such as Western Europe) of the Rimland. At this point Cohen expands geopolitics, breaking the world down to geostrategic regions and shatterbelts.

Geostrategic regions and shatterbelts are defined according to Cohen, as

geostrategic regions [which] must be large enough to possess certain globe-influencing characteristics and functions [such as natural resources, strategic value, etc.], because today's strategy can only be expressed in global terms. The geostrategic region is the expression of the interrelationship of a large part of the world in terms of location, movement,

<sup>17</sup>Saul Cohen, Geography and Politics in a World Divided, p.60.

trade orientation, and cultural or ideological bonds.<sup>18</sup>

Geostrategic regions can then be broken down into geopolitical regions. "The geopolitical region is a subdivision of the above...Contiguity of location and complementarity of resources are particularly distinguishing marks of the geopolitical region."<sup>19</sup>

Cohen, modifying Mackinder, sees the world partitioned into two geostrategic regions, the trade-dependent Maritime World and secondly, the Eurasian continental world. The center, or core of the Maritime World is the United States, while the USSR is the core of the Eurasian continental world. Cohen calls these two regions nodal. He also recognizes Western Europe and China as second power nodes within these geostrategic regions. He then divides the geostrategic regions into geopolitical regions.

The Trade-Dependent Maritime World includes:

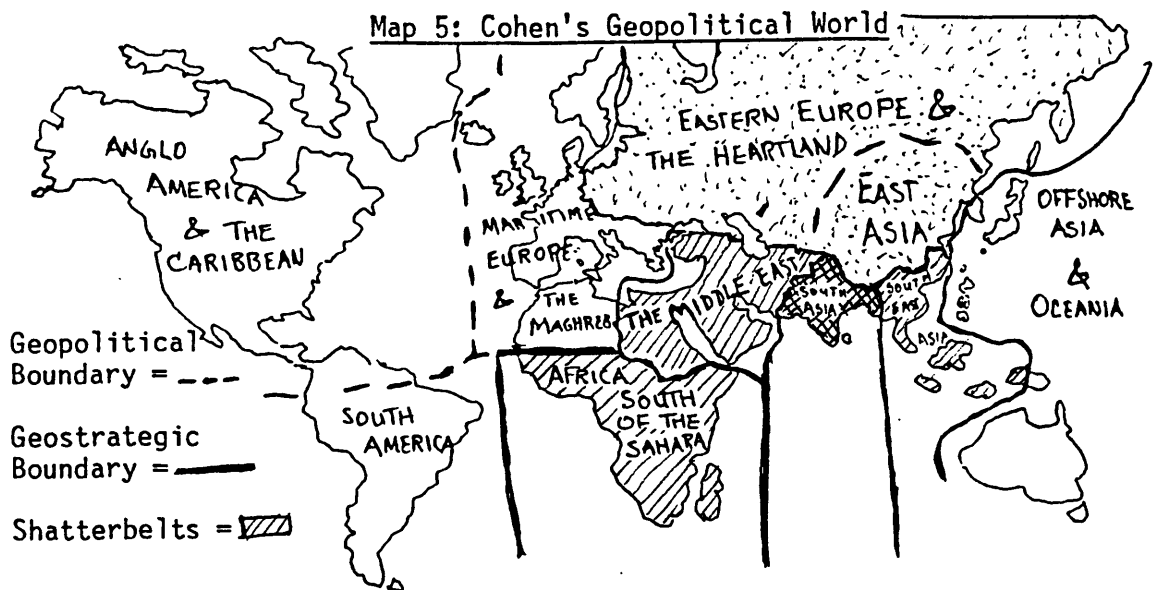
- a) Anglo America and the Caribbean, b) Maritime Europe and the Maghreb, c) offshore Asia and Oceania, and d) South America. The Eurasian Continental World includes:
- a) the Russian Heartland and Eastern Europe, and b) the East Asian mainland."<sup>20</sup> (See map 5, p.19).

Cohen does not account for Africa below the Sahara, or South Asia (the Indian sub-continent), but curiously refers to South East Asia and the Middle East as shatterbelts. He defines the shatterbelt as a "large, strategically located region that is occupied by a number of conflicting states and is caught between the conflicting

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p.64.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p.65.





interests of the Great Powers."<sup>21</sup> In essence, what Cohen is suggesting is that the shatterbelts are the critical parts of the Rimland which the trade dependent Maritime World must control or neutralize if it is to prevent the Eurasian Continental World from becoming the dominant world power.

This concept of the shatterbelt and the designation of which states lie within it implies not only where the great powers will be having their major conflicts, but also who will be warring alongside with (or supplied by) them in the events of these conflicts. An example of a shatterbelt would be the Middle East. Here the super-powers are having their major diplomatic and military conflicts, even if the conflicts are fought by each power's respective client states and not between the two great powers themselves. This suggestion of Cohen's seems to contradict the Truman Doctrine which implies that all areas of the Rimland are equally important—which is the basis of American

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p.66.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p.251.

containment policy. It is here that Cohen stops analyzing world relationships between the various powers and instead to be promoting a national foreign policy as Haushofer did, becoming less objective and more biased. Peter Taylor of the Department of Geography from the University of Newcastle upon the Tyne agrees:

Like them [previous Geopolitiker] he is attempting to inform his own country's foreign policy. Cohen's revised model is explicitly intended to counteract the calls for a renewal of containment policy in the wake of the election of conservative Ronald Reagan to the presidency, for instance. Cohen's is very much an American view of the world and as such continues our ideological heritage.<sup>22</sup>

Once again, a geopolitical model reflects American containment policy, or in this case, a modified containment policy. This association should be kept in mind when one attempts to analyze American foreign policy.

## 1.2 Geopolitics and Technology.

The Soviet Union, the major Heartland power, now has access to the sea lanes, which was according to Mackinder to be prevented at all costs by the Maritime powers if they were to survive. Obviously, parts of geopolitics must now be re-thought since the Soviets have attained access to the seas but still lack control of the Rimland. It is fair to

<sup>22</sup>Peter J. Taylor, Political Geography, World-Economy, Nation-State, and Locality, p.41.

say that nuclear deterrence has played a key role in maintaining the geographical status quo. This would explain why the U.S.S.R. has access to the seas but not to Paris. Critics, in fact, complain that nuclear weapons make geopolitics obsolete. If one observes geopolitics today, one must address the changes in technology of our era, as Mackinder did in his. Hans Morgenthau recognized that technology is one of the most, if not the most, dynamic factors in determining national power when he wrote,

the fate of nations and of civilizations has often been determined by a differential in the technology of warfare for which the inferior side was unable to compensate in other ways.<sup>23</sup>

When first expressing his theories of Heartland domination of the "World Island", Mackinder felt this was going to come about due to the technological change of the time, railroads. They would make it easier for the Heartland powers to get their military to the contested Rimland areas than the more time-consuming naval transportation systems of the Maritime powers. Today, the major Heartland power, the Soviet Union, has yet to conquer the Rimland. It seems that technology in the form of air transportation has made railroad transportation less effective. Desmond Ball quotes Albert Wohlstetter in his attempt to show how geopolitics is obsolete due to modern technological breakthroughs by writing,

The capacity for long-distance lift of the major powers massively exceeds that for short-distance lift

<sup>23</sup>Hans J. Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations: the Struggle for Power and Peace 4th ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), pp. 115-116.

inside the theater, especially in the very short ranges in which the battle would be joined. These bottlenecks inside the theater are largely determined by local factors: climate, terrain, harbors, port unloading facilities, railroads and roads, etc. They are not a function of the long haul distances. The specific local circumstances and opportunities to change them may favor the combatant that starts from far off or the one that starts from nearby. On the Thai-Laos border the United States can lift, from 8,500 miles away, four times as much as China can from 450 miles away.<sup>24</sup>

In other words, U.S. technology makes China's geographical advantage obsolete. However, the major Heartland power is not China, but the U.S.S.R. The U.S.S.R. and the United States, the two major superpowers, roughly balance one another out, and therefore bring stability to technology, the dynamic aspect of world power shifts.

In a sense, modern technology serves as something of an equalizer. In the case of nuclear forces, differences in the size of respective arsenals, beyond a certain minimum capability, are relatively inconsequential. In this respect, a deterrence system based on nuclear weapons is quite different -

<sup>24</sup>Ciro E. Zoppo and Charles Zoppo and Charles Zorgbide, ed., On Geopolitics, Classical and Nuclear (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1985), "Modern Technology and Geopolitics," by Desmond Ball, p.189.

and, in particular, is somewhat more stable - than the traditional Balance of Power system, where relatively marginal imbalances could be significant. And at the conventional level, the new technologies of power projection mean that differences in relative distances from the homeland bases to areas of interest, even where these differences amount to thousands of miles, are less important than differences in tactical mobility in the areas of interest themselves.<sup>25</sup>

The technology of today's era has not rendered geopolitics useless as an analytical approach, but instead we can see that there is "an extremely complex, interdependent and dynamic relationship between technology, geography, and national power."<sup>26</sup> From a geopolitical standpoint, as the relative technology of a state (as compared with other states) increases so does its geographic strategic value and national power. The geographic situation of a state sets the parameters of a state's ability to exercise its national power.

Nuclear war, and its inherent threat of mutual assured destruction, has truly stabilized the world's spheres of influence between the two superpowers. The Soviet Union may have access to the seas, but the reality of nuclear deterrence has kept Soviet expansion into Western Europe at bay. When technologies become relatively unequal between rivals such as China and the United States we see that geographic factors are neutralized, however, when technologies are similar,

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p.192.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p.193.

geographic strategical factors remain. In other words, the technological parity between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. continues to keep the Rimland-Heartland balance of power intact.

### 1.3 A Modern Geopolitical Division of the World.

Historically one can see a geographical pattern that has evolved between key insular powers and key continental (Heartland) powers. Insular nations (as Britain and Japan) have tended to seek to control key geographic straits and other geostrategic regions in order to achieve economic freedom and dominance.

Britain and Japan provide well documented cases for the role of influence of insular countries on international developments. On the contrary, the cases of the U.S.S.R. and Germany are of an expansionist character (not imperialist as the insular ones), because their central geographical position poses sometimes the need for expansion due to the "complex of encirclement," which particularly dominated Russia and the Soviet Union. This is aggravated by the fact that the powers of the Rimlands do not usually pay attention to it and do not soften the impact by their policies.<sup>27</sup>

Today, when one compares the superpowers and their respective military

<sup>27</sup>Ciro E. Zoppo and Charles Zorgbide, eds., On Geopolitics, Classical and Nuclear (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1985), "Geopolitics and the "Low Politics" Perspective," by John Kinnas, p.254.

alliances one sees a reflection of the insecurity by the Heartland power and a need for economic control by the insular powers.

The Eastern Alliance (Warsaw Pact) has been successful in giving pride of place to the military sector, to which the advanced areas of the economy are assigned, to the detriment of a domestic civilian sector which is subordinate to it, underdeveloped and, in the last analysis, maintained by the West. On the other hand, the parties to the Western Alliance (NATO and Japan) are essentially economy oriented, anxious to develop trade and to increase their markets and submitting to increase their military machines only when their vital interests are threatened.<sup>28</sup>

The Heartland power, the Soviet Union, has organized its sphere for defense against outside aggression, and historically can be seen as seeking to defend itself. The U.S.A. and the other historical Rimland Powers are in step with their historical goal, economic domination.

A key ingredient to Rimland security has been economic security, while that of the Heartland has been military. At the turn of the 20th Century, the world was at the highpoint of the age of imperialism. Today, the third world is politically free of their colonial masters. Economically, especially through the eyes of the dependistas, the World Systems analysts, and many others, there is general agreement that the

<sup>28</sup>Ciro E. Zoppo and Charles Zorgbide, eds. On Geopolitics: Classical and Nuclear (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1985), "Alliances as the Organizers of International Political Spaces," by Charles Zorgbide, p.230.

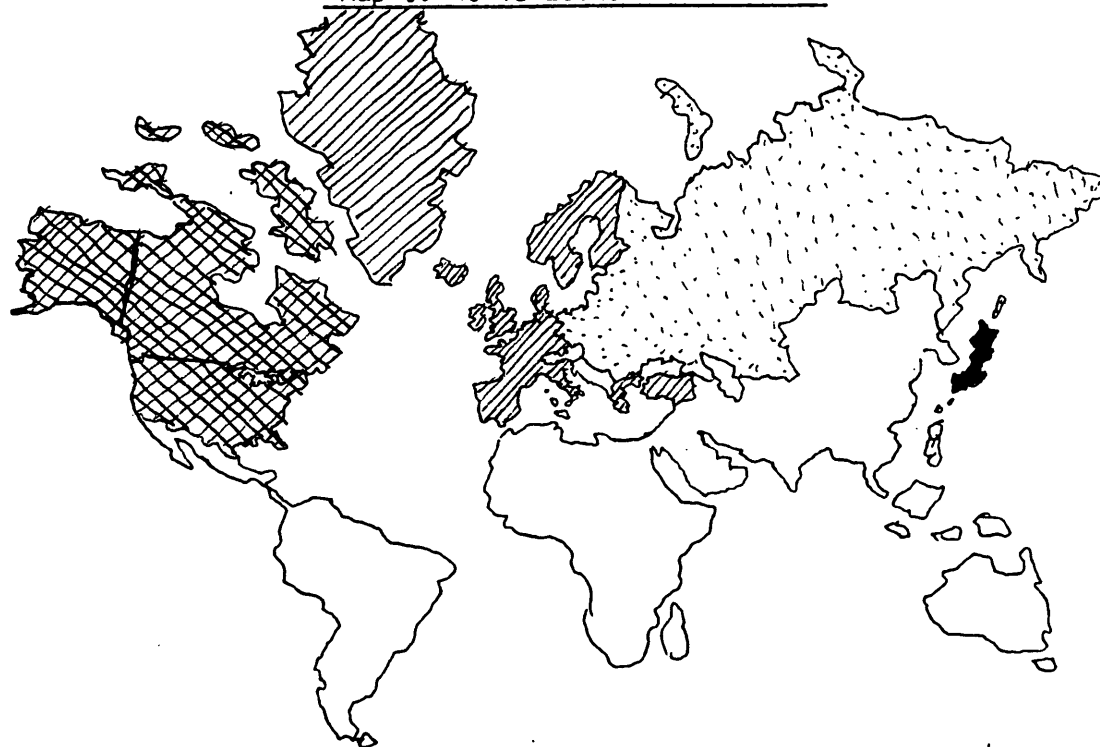
former colonial powers still control the international economy. The major powers (U.S.A., Western Europe and Japan) within the Rimland still have what a geopolitical perspective would suggest they wanted to begin with, namely economic control and domination. The West places as much value on its economic security as the Soviet Union places on its military security.






The Middle East plays a key role with regards to Western and Soviet security. The Middle East, due to its vast oil wealth, is vital to the Western economic system. The Middle East also borders the Soviet Union. No other area in the world is so geographically important to the two contending centers of power. Therefore, one nation's containment is another nation's expansion. Cooperation within the Middle East between the West and the Soviet Union is made difficult because both sides' respective securities are at risk in this region, and they feel justified in their competing regional policies.

It is at this point that modifications will be made in order to update Cohen's 1974 model of geopolitics. In a very simplified division of the economic world, four economic core areas exist, the United States, Western Europe, Japan and the Soviet Union. The rest of the world for sake of convenience will be seen as nations of the postcolonial periphery. (See map 6, p.27). This grouping of the rest of the world into the post colonial periphery has been done already by other political economists, including the dependency theorists, and those that follow the "world systems" approach. In all fairness, grouping Australia and New Zealand in the same economic division with Ethiopia and Afghanistan is inappropriate.










Map 6: World Economic Divisions



-  = USA
-  = WESTERN EUROPE
-  = USSR and COMECON
-  = JAPAN
-  = the PERIPHERY

The next simple division of the world will be in military terms. (See map 7 below).








-  = USA
-  = USSR
-  = China
-  = Islamic World
-  = Arab League
-  = Islamic states not members of the Arab League
-  = other

There are five divisions and the two superpowers and their allies will consist of one zone each. China, out of respect for its size and human resources, but not its technology, will be given a zone. The Islamic world due to its economic resources and its various attempts of political unity against the West (i.e. the Arab League, O.P.E.C., Islamic fundamentalism, etc.) is also be awarded a zone. The final zone includes the rest of the world, which in all fairness should be divided

into more zones, but due to their poor technological levels most of these states are minor figures in the world balance of power individually (the four major exceptions to this generalization being Brazil, Mexico, India, and Vietnam). By overlapping these two divisions (economic and military) of the world I propose a geopolitical model reflecting the divided world in macroterms. Unlike Cohen, I will not divide the world into geostrategic and geopolitical subdivision, but rather just have geopolitical regions. (See map 8 below).

Map 8: A Revised Geopolitical World Map



-  =the Maritime Core
-  =the Heartland
-  =the Middle East
-  =the Far East
-  =the Post Colonial Periphery

The first geopolitical region will be the Maritime Core. Though Cohen proposes to divide Western Europe, Japan, and North America into separate geostrategic areas, I will keep them as one since all are under the military umbrella of the United States, have similar technologies, and dominate the world economic system through mutual cooperation. The second geostrategic region should be the Heartland which is dominated by the Soviet Union, but includes Eastern Europe, and Mongolia. The third region would be China. The fourth geostrategic region will be called the Middle East, which will range from Morocco to Pakistan. The last geostrategic region will be called the Postcolonial Periphery, and will include the rest of the world's nations.

The Middle East and the Postcolonial Periphery are very similar. These two regions have no great powers within their respective regions to protect or dominate them, therefore the member states within these regions tend to be manipulated and sometimes even coerced by powers from the other three regions. In other words, these two regions are vastly weaker than the first three mentioned. From Cohen's perspective, these two weaker regions would be considered as shatterbelts, for they are at the mercy of the three more powerful regions, and they are also the spoils that are divided and redivided in the ongoing political and economic wars between the more powerful regions. The Middle East would have been included within the Postcolonial Periphery were it not for the extreme importance the Middle East plays in the economic security of the Maritime Core and the military security of the Heartland.

There are two major themes that keep recurring within geopolitics. The first is that throughout its history geopolitics promotes one key

idea, that world domination is determined by two opposing forces, the Heartland and the Rimland. By definition, these two forces must contain each other—containment is the core of the geopolitical analysis when interpreting world power shifts and the strategies used by geopolitical actors when attempting to create these shifts. The second major theme of geopolitics is the recognition of the role that the dynamics of technology plays in altering the geographical potential of the various geopolitical entities.

## Chapter II

### The Middle East Within the Scope of Geopolitics and Contending Explanations.

#### 2.1 An Introduction to the Middle East.

Throughout written history, the Middle East has been the crossroad of marching armies with dreams of Empire. Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon, and Hitler all sent legions here. This ancient battleground today encompasses the economically important Suez Canal and shares the Straits of Gibraltar, while it also controls the access to the Mediterranean Sea from the Black Sea, thus effectively controlling the Soviet Union's Black Sea fleet's access to the Mediterranean via the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. This geographic region historically has been crucial for world domination. The discovery of oil has helped the West discover it as a key ingredient of economic might. To the Soviets, the Middle East is a potential military buffer against the West.

In this paper the term "Middle East" will include Morocco, Mauritania, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Sudan, Egypt, Israel, the Palestinian territories, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the two Yemens, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Iraq, Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Historically, "the term 'Middle East' was one of strategic reference developed in an Eurocentered world, just as the older terms 'the East,' 'Far East' and

'Near East' had been."<sup>29</sup> In 1902, according to V. Chirol, the Middle East even included Tibet.<sup>30</sup> When the Western journalists, and later politicians and those in academia used the term, its conceptional boundaries were as culturally insensitive as any boundary cut out by the Europeans in colonial Africa.

To an Egyptian it would seem absurd that an Algerian is a non-Middle Easterner, while an Iranian is. Yet, even Saul Cohen, defined Algeria as belonging to the geopolitical region of "Europe and the Maghreb" and not to the Middle East, despite the fact that geopolitical regions are defined as a "subdivision of the above (Geostrategic regions) and they tend to be relatively homogenous in terms of one or more of culture, economics, and politics."<sup>31</sup> Clearly the Middle East within this framework of Cohen's is being minimized at Europe's gain. It is equally amazing that the Baluchis of Iran and Afghanistan are often considered Middle Eastern, but the Baluchis living across the border in Pakistan are not. Eurocentric academia has attempted to lessen the theoretical size of the Middle East without regards to culture and politics (Morocco is a member of the Arab League) in direct contradiction to its own geopolitical framework.

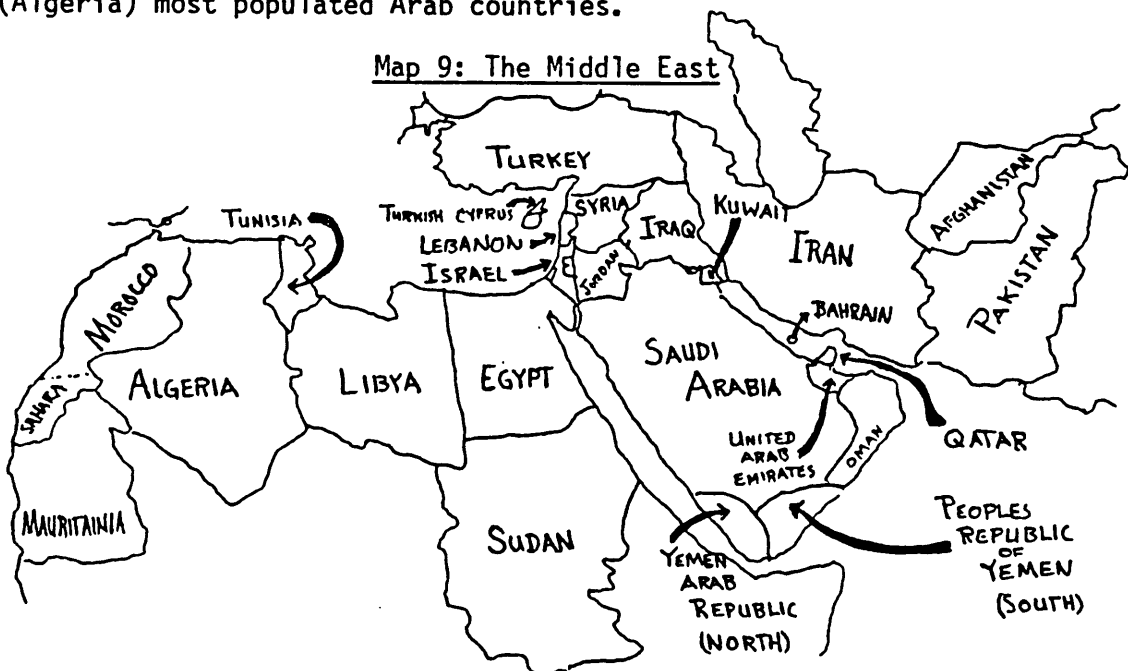
The two major cultural groups within the Middle East are the Semitic Arabs in the West and the Indo-Aryans in the East. The two

<sup>29</sup>Peter Beaumont, Gerald H. Blake, and J. Malcolm Wagstaff, The Middle East: A Geographical Study (London: John Wiley and Sons, 1976), p.1.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p.1.

<sup>31</sup>Peter J. Taylor, Political Geography, World-Economy, Nation-State and Locality, p.44.

glaring exceptions to this relatively homogenous duality are the Mongolian Turks in the North (who are as Muslim as any of their neighbors) and the recent Jewish (semitic) colonists of Israel. With the exception of Israel, every country listed by the author as Middle Eastern has a Muslim majority. Quite clearly this concept of the Middle East fits the definition of a geopolitical region (see chapter 1) better than Cohen's Middle East which excluded the second (Morocco) and third (Algeria) most populated Arab countries.



2.2

The Orthodox Cultural Argument.

Some geopoliticians, such as Cohen, argue that cultural division within the Middle East dictates U.S. foreign policy. In simplified terms some (including Cohen) have argued that within the Middle East there are two opposing sides, Arab<sup>32</sup> and non-Arab cultures. On the

<sup>32</sup>Arabs in the perspective of the writer are not a race since a blond blue eyed Syrian and a Black Sudanese are both considered Arab.



surface, this explanation is quite attractive. The major non-Arab states are Israel, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. Since WWII, except for isolated Afghanistan, the others have been friends of the United States. The nation of Turkey is in NATO. Israel is a major, if not the major, American client state in the region, and Iran under the Shah was a crucial U.S. ally. With the event of the Iranian revolution 1978-1979, part of this myth has been put to rest. The rest of this myth is discredited by the present U.S. alliance system in the Middle East that also includes many Arab states. On the American list of client states are such nations as Saudi Arabia (which has been America's friend in the area before Israel existed), Egypt, Jordan (whose monarch has been saved many times by Israel), Oman, Morocco, and Kuwait, all of whom are Muslim, Arab states.

What proponents of the "cultural argument" for U.S. foreign policy seem to be claiming is that due to the Arab-Israeli dispute the United States will always side with Israel and thus continually alienate the Arab world, since this polarizing dispute leaves no room for compromise. The large U.S. Jewish population, their Christian supporters within the U.S., and the well organized Jewish lobbies within the United States seem to lend credit to those that believe that U.S. foreign policy is at least partially culturally oriented, that is, pro-Israel. President Truman candidly told Ibn Saud the King of Saudi Arabia: "I have to answer to hundreds of thousands who are anxious for the success of Zionism. I do not have hundreds of thousands of Arabs among my constituents."<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup>James Lee Ray, The Future of American-Israeli Relations, A Parting of the Ways? (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1985), quoting from FDR Meets Ibn Saud, by William Eddy, p.7.

Up until 1967, the United States was seen as a juggler, trying to accommodate both the Arabs and the Israelis. True, it gave millions to Israel, but it also pressured Israel to return the Sinai to Egypt after the 1956 war. When the 1956 war ended, President Dwight Eisenhower moved quite forcefully to convince the Israelis to return the territory they had conquered during the hostilities. Following the 1967 war, President Lyndon Johnson accepted the Jewish state's territorial gains. One result of the six day war of 1967 was the polarization of the superpowers, where the U.S. found itself becoming more energetic in its support for Israel and the Soviets were siding politically and militarily with the Arabs, especially with the Egyptians.

The argument of cultural bias loses validity when one takes into account the years following the 1973 war to the present (1989). Many factors have altered America's role from an unconditional supporter of Israel to that of Middle East mediator. One major factor in this reversal of policy was the success of the Arab oil embargo, which threatened the economic health of the western world. Another was Anwar Sadat.

Sadat was faced with the burden of trying to get back the Sinai Peninsula from Israel. He knew the longer the Israelis stayed, the more acceptable it would seem to the world that the Israelis be there and it was possible that Israel might even annex it.

So in 1972 Sadat presented the United States with one of its greatest victories in the Cold War: Without informing Secretary Kissinger in advance of his intentions or extracting anything from Washington in return,

he expelled twenty thousand Russians from Egypt.<sup>34</sup>

For his troubles, Sadat got nothing. As a result, Sadat became convinced that the only way to break the diplomatic deadlock was to have a limited war with Israel. The 1973 war caught the world by surprise. Eventually a military stalemate was achieved, though it did seem possible for Israel to win the confrontation. The journalist, Edward R.F. Sheehan relates that

during this crisis, Nixon and Kissinger warned Mrs. Meir they would suspend deliveries of American arms if the Israelis pursued their assault on the (Egyptian) Third Army. (In fact Kissinger threatened) to send food and medicine to the Third Army (by American helicopters) if Israel did not allow the Egyptians to establish their own relief corridor.<sup>35</sup>

The Israelis backed down, allowing the Third Army to be supplied. What is most significant about this episode is the fact that an American politician who was Jewish led his nation in forcing Israel to make concessions in order that the United States better its diplomatic position in the world. Kissinger's move allowed the United States to cement ties with Egypt, which became the foundation of "Sadat's pilgrimage to Jerusalem (November 1977), the Camp David accords (September 1978), the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty (March 1979), [and]

<sup>34</sup>Stephen E. Ambrose, Rise to Globalism, American Foreign Policy since 1938 4th ed. (Harrisonburg, VA: R.R. Donnelly and Sons Co., 1985), pp.273-274.

<sup>35</sup>Edward R.F. Sheehan, The Arabs, Israelis and Kissinger (New York: Readers Digest Press, 1976), p.37.

the complete Israeli withdrawal from Sinai (April 1982)."<sup>36</sup>

Sheehan proposes that Kissinger's Jewishness gave him some immunity from the Jewish lobbies that other non-Jewish politicians did not enjoy. The implication is that the Arabs do not have their own lobbies to counterbalance American-Jewish demands and protect pro-Arabists. This may have been the case in the late sixties, but since OPEC's oil embargo in the early seventies the Arabs have enjoyed the support of the oil lobbies. Slowly, Arab Americans have begun building their own lobbies. The most important was founded in 1972, the National Association for Arab Americans. However, Jews still outnumber Arabs in America 6 million to 2 million.

The single most stunning defeat for the U.S. Jewish lobbies was when business—including American banks, oil companies, construction companies and weapons manufacturers—decided to confront the Jewish lobbies in the early 1980's.

That constituency of economic interests enjoyed its greatest success to date in persuading the U.S. Senate to approve the sale of five AWACS radar planes to Saudi Arabia in 1981, despite vigorous opposition from the Israeli lobby. In fact, supporters of Israel and the lobby now argue that the influence of economic interests in support of Arab causes has reached dangerous proportions.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Ishaq I. Ghanayem and Alden H. Voth, The Kissinger Legacy, American-Middle East Policy, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1984), p.199.

<sup>37</sup> James Lee Ray, The Future of American-Israeli Relations, the Parting of the Ways?, p.33.

The actions of business show that the economic goals of the Maritime Core are also shared by the citizens of the U.S.

Finally, the support for Israel within the U.S. has been dwindling. As a result of the Holocaust in Europe, the Jewish nation of Israel has traditionally received much moral support and sympathy within the United States. A Gallup Report, August 1982, p.4, asked Americans the question, "In the Middle East situation, are your sympathies more with Israel or more with the Arab nations?"<sup>38</sup> This question was asked twenty three times in a time frame of fifteen years from June of 1967 to September of 1982. The dates are important for they begin with the 1967 war and end with the massacres in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, carried out by Israel's Christian allies. In June of 1967, 56% favored Israel, 4% the Arab nations, 25% neither, and 15% no opinion. By September of 1982 the poll showed that 32% favored Israel, 28% the Arab nations, 21% neither and no opinion 19%. The results of a poll done by Louis Harris in September of 1980, commissioned by the acting president of the World Jewish Congress, showed that 72 percent of Americans surveyed agreed with the statement that

there must be a way to guarantee Israel's security and also give the Palestinians an independent state on the West Bank. Even more surprising was that 59 percent of American Jews agreed with that statement.<sup>39</sup>

Within the time frame of the Gallup poll (1967-1982), we see the

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p.58.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p.59.

image of the Israeli change from Nazi victim to oppressor of women and children. In the late eighties (February 1988 to March 1989), Israel had killed over four hundred Palestinians taking part in the "Intifada" uprisings in the occupied Palestinian territories. This violently suppressed revolt tarnished Israel's image and bred sympathy for the Palestinians. As this continues, the efforts of the American Israeli lobby will continue to be faced with an uphill battle. In short, traditional American support for Israel is lessening, thus weakening the argument that cultural similarity will cause America to always side with Israel in disputes with the Arabs.

### 2.3

#### The Orthodox Ideological Argument.

Another argument, though no longer heard as often, is that the United States chooses its allies along ideological lines, or at least gives preference to states with ideologies similar to the U.S.'s over those that are not. This would imply that democratic Israel would be favored over any non-democracy in the area. If this were true, however, then why is the militarily dominated and authoritarian Turkish state a member of NATO while Israel is not? Israel did apply for membership in the 1950's, but Eisenhower refused it, feeling that Israeli membership would make the West seem partisan against the Arabs. In the 1980's the U.S. pressured Israel into returning the Sinai to Egypt and also had a firm ally in Pakistan's military ruler, Zia ul-Haq. If the United States is following any ideology, it is not making the world "safe for democracy", but rather, safe from Soviet domination. Here, the

containment strategy of geopolitics triumphs over the orthodox argument supporting ideology.

One should glance at the Arab states to see with whom they were consorting (from the late 1950's to the mid-1970's) to further evaluate the ideological explanation. After the Suez War (1956), Nasser became a firm friend of the Soviet Union's.

As Nasser continued to spread propaganda for Arab unity and socialism while taking more aid from the Soviet Union and allowing more Russians into his country, Eisenhower and Dulles feared that the Russians would move into the Middle East "vacuum" and had to be forestalled. Attempted coups and counter coups in Syria, Jordan, and Iraq by pro and anti-Nasserites increased American anxiety. So on January 5, 1959, Ike asked Congress for authority to use American armed forces in the Middle East "if the President determines the necessity...to assist any nation...requesting assistance against armed aggression from any country controlled by international communism."<sup>39</sup>

It was during this time that the United States replaced France as Israel's chief arms supplier. America's goal was clear: containing communism, containing the Soviet Union, and ultimately supporting the geopolitical concept of containing the expansion of the Heartland.

<sup>40</sup> Stephen E. Ambrose, Rise to Globalism, American Foreign Policy since 1938, p.267.

#### 2.4 The Establishment of Geopolitical Boundaries within the Middle East.

As was discussed earlier, the needs of the Maritime core of geopolitics were economic fulfillment, while those of the Heartland were military. While there are not that many people within the Middle East who would enjoy seeing their country part of the Soviet military alliance and living with the same limited degree of national choice as enjoyed in Eastern Europe, many would like to share in the luxuries and goods that the West offers. Unlike most third world nations, the Middle Eastern states enjoy much mineral-petroleum wealth to barter with the West. It is this major difference that allows the West to have an advantage over the Soviets when it comes to making agreements and understandings within the Region. Still, not all parts of the Middle East are equally important to the West or to the Soviets. These intraregional differences make it necessary to divide the Middle East into subregions. The Middle East is subdivided into the areas of North Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, Greater Syria, and the Northern Tier (See map 10, p.45.). The Northern Tier consists of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and Turkey. Greater Syria consists of Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, and the British Mandate of Palestine territory. The Arabian Peninsula consists of all Arabian Asian states not part of Greater Syria, and the African region includes all Arab states in Africa (including Egyptian Sinai).

The divisions of the Middle East are important geographical



features of this geopolitical region. A most important geographical feature of a state is its boundary with the outside world.

Frontiers and boundaries are respectively the zones and lines which separate areas of different political authority...Boundaries and frontiers are evocative subjects, which easily arouse patriotic or nationalist feelings and (the political geographer) Siegfried has warned of the inherent dangers in such topics.<sup>41</sup>

To say boundary disputes serve as a focal point in the Middle East is a vast understatement. According to the political geographer, J.R.V. Prescott of the University of Melbourne, Australia, there are five factors that affect the outcome of a boundary dispute:

- 1) The geographical importance of the dispute to one or both governments will influence their attitude to the question.
- 2) The outcome of the dispute will be influenced by the extent to which both authorities can derive some benefit.
- 3) The relative strengths of the countries will influence the outcome of any dispute.

<sup>41</sup>J.R.V. Prescott, Political Geography (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd. 1972), p.54.

- 4) The fourth factor involves what may be described as the world political climate. Present world opinion disapproves the use of military force to solve border disputes.
  
- 5) When the legal process is used instead of force, the arguments of the contending powers are judged by their merits, most likely by the international community.<sup>42</sup>

For the remainder of this text, when addressing the border disputes of the various Middle Eastern nations, I will explain how different disputes were solved, if they were. First, though, I will add that the borders are not just adjusted by the states involved, but also by the outside powers that influence the region. From a geopolitical perspective, it would stand to reason that if a nation-state would benefit from a territorial gain, so would its outside supporter.

While the geopolitical boundaries as well as respective states within them may be in conflict with one another, one must not forget that creation of boundaries is most often as a result of conflict. It is this conflict that influences the relationship that the neighbors have with one another. Geography can be seen, therefore, as a factor in determining historical disputes as well as creating the "Weltanschauung" of the various cultures and ideologies within a geographical region. This suggests that ideology and culture are influenced by geography

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., pp.67-68.

and they are all tools to help further the geopolitician's analysis of the power dynamics of the world.

The orthodox explanations of culture and ideology fail to provide adequate explanations of the Middle East's power shifts by themselves. They do not address the Western need for containing the Soviet expansion into areas considered critical for the continuation of Western economic success. The Heartland/Rimland explanation of world political shifts survives the attacks made by the above mentioned counterarguments.

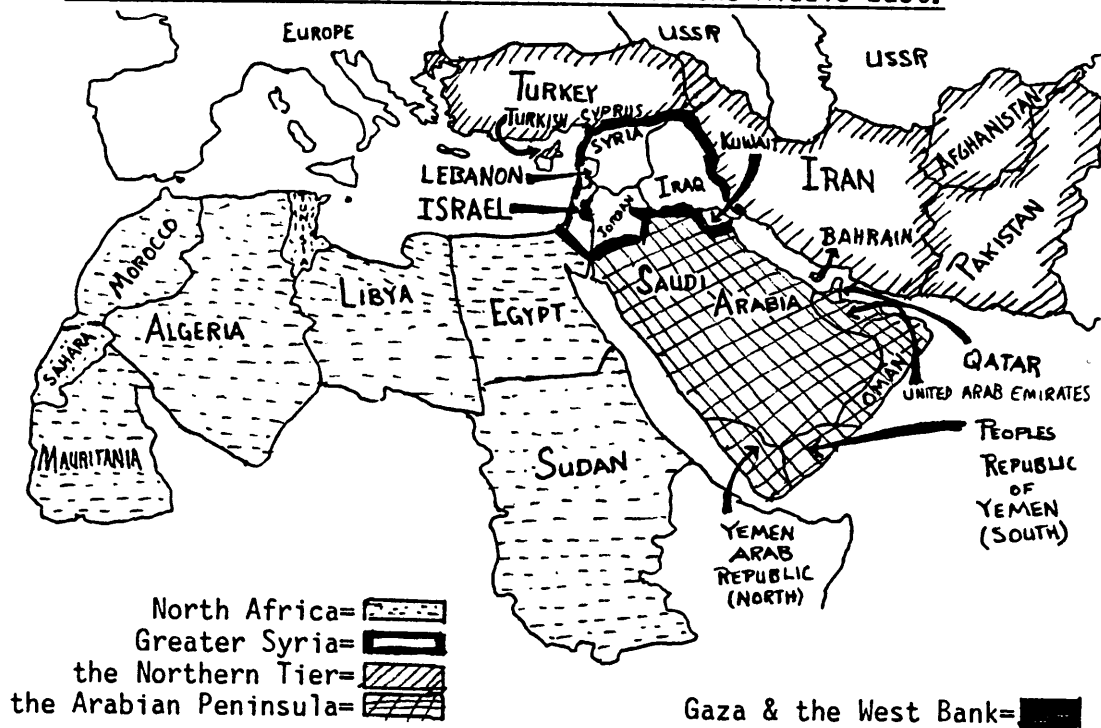
### Chapter 3

## The Geopolitical Subentities of the Middle East, and the States within Them.

### 3.1 The Northern Tier

Since the primacy of geopolitical theory has been established and the Middle East defined and divided into regions, it is now time to attempt to analyze the power struggle for dominance between the

Map 11: The Geopolitical Subdivisions of the Middle East.



Maritime core (discussed in chapter one) and the Soviet Union within the weaker geopolitical region, which Cohen defines as a shatterbelt, known as the Middle East. As mentioned in chapter II, the Northern Tier was the most critical sub-region of the Middle East. The Northern Tier of the Middle East shares its boundaries with the Soviet Union. In its quest for parity with Maritime core states, the Soviets have developed a navy. The problem its navy faces is that it is bottled up. Its

four fleet base areas all have their distinct limitations: the Baltic and Black Sea fleets are based in potentially 'closed seas' (with the choke points at the Dardanelles, the Oresund Strait out of the Baltic, the Strait of Gibraltar, and the Suez Canal); while the Northern and Pacific fleets are not without their problems in terms of access to the open sea. The Kola coastline offers 240 miles, ice-free year-round (from the Norwegian frontier to Sjavatoi Nos), while the southern most distance from the ice pack to the Kola coastline is 180 miles. Soviet surface vessels thus are restricted for part of the year by the narrow corridor between land and ice, and - all year round - they (and submarines also) must, for access into the North Atlantic, transit the NATO - monitored gateway into the North Atlantic, the Greenland - Iceland - Faeroese - United Kingdom gap(s).<sup>43</sup>

<sup>43</sup>Colin S. Gray, The Geopolitics of the Nuclear Era: Heartland, Rimlands and the Technological Revolution (New York: Crane, Russak and Company, Inc. 1977), p.42.

The Northern Tier not only controls access to the Black Sea, but also access to the "Persian"<sup>44</sup> Gulf. Needless to say, the Soviet Union would be greatly pleased if it could manage to bring Turkey, Iran or a union of Afghanistan and Pakistan into its list of client states, for its navy would no longer be "bottled up." After World War II, the traditional powers that had contained the Soviet Union's expansion, Germany, Japan, and United Kingdom, lay exhausted from the conflict, and at that point the United States stepped forward to champion the Rimland cause and to contain Soviet expansion. It was on June 7, 1945, with the war over in Europe, when the Soviet Union made its demands on the Turkish State:

Molotov announced the price for a treaty with Russia:

(1) the Kars and Ardahan districts of eastern Turkey, ceded to Turkey in 1921, would have to be retroceded to Russia; (2) the Turks would have to consent to Soviet bases in the straits.<sup>45</sup>

The Turks were aghast at these demands, and the United Kingdom and the United States dismayed.

Later, in his memoirs, Truman attempted to explain

Stalin's ambitions in the Balkans and the Near East:

The persistent way in which Stalin blocked one of the war-preventative measures I [Truman] had proposed showed how his mind worked and what he was after. I had proposed

<sup>44</sup> Quotation marks recognize the Arab-Persian dispute over whether the gulf is the Arabian or Persian. In this paper "Persian" Gulf will appear, since it is the more commonly used name for that body of water.

<sup>45</sup> Bruce Rubelet Kuniholm, The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980), p.258.

the internationalization of all the principal waterways. Stalin did not want this. What Stalin wanted was control of the Black Sea straits and the Danube. The Russians were planning world conquest.<sup>46</sup>

The above summation by Harry S. Truman, illustrates the conclusions drawn by the American administration. At this time spectres of appeasement (Hitler's Munich) developed, which evolved into an over reaction by the State Department, for the U.S. saw the Soviet goals as only expansionistic. The Soviet goals in Turkey and in neighboring Iran (where the Soviets had troops in the North of that country) were policies derived from historical goals which were at once defensive and expansionist, and were accentuated by a legacy of contempt for and hostility toward the governments of both (Turkey and Iran) countries.<sup>47</sup>

Eventually Iran and Turkey joined the West for security based on the old Middle Eastern saying, the enemy of my enemy is my friend. It was the Soviet threat that induced Turkey to join NATO, an organization set up with one clear objective, containing the Soviets. It was the Nixon doctrine (1969), though it was not specifically designed for the Middle East, that armed the Shah of Iran and the Saudis. Nixon also was intent on containing the Soviets.

Pakistan, seeing red on its borders after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, made several agreements with the United States, including one allowing the U.S. to fund Muslim rebels in Afghanistan

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p.265.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p.303.

through Pakistan. What is truly interesting to note here is that in Afghanistan the United States is aiding Islamic fundamentalists against the Soviets, even though everywhere else in the Middle East, the U.S. is in conflict with Islamic fundamentalism.

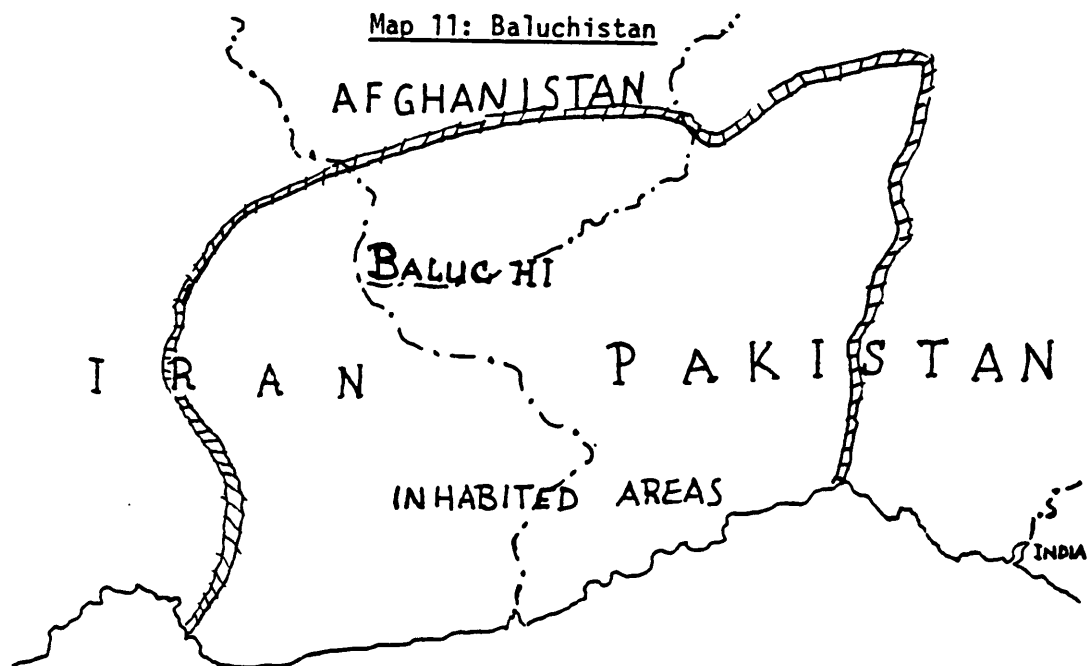
This alone should show how even today the principal fear guiding U.S. policy is Soviet expansion and its single favorite cure, containment. Along this "Northern Tier" a geographical pattern has established itself with respect to regional alliances. Most states in the area, due to the Soviet presence on their borders, seek outside aid in warding off the threat. The United States, equally concerned by the Soviet "threat," is more than ready to help. The Northern Tier is the American bulwark against Soviet expansion in the area.

The glaring question confronting this perspective is why isn't Iran an American ally at present. Historically, Iran has been a neutral power, except for the period immediately after the Soviet occupation of northern Iran (during WWII), when it made an uncharacteristic alliance with an outside power, the U.S. Iran is now neutral again, though still economically linked with the West. Since Iran's trade ties are with the West, it is effectively dominated by the Maritime Core, thus reaffirming its part in containing the Heartland.

It has been suggested that the Soviet Union expanded into Afghanistan in order to defend itself from Islamic fundamentalism, which could have spread from Iran to Afghanistan, and ultimately into the Southern U.S.S.R. which is now home to forty million Muslims. The Soviet Union's action not only preserved the balance of power in the subregion, but also secured its southern border.



An alternative theory also existed in the early 1980's on why the Soviets were in Afghanistan. In the triangle area of the Afghani, Pakistani and Iranian boundaries live the Baluchis who are divided within all three states. Prescott's (p.43) second rule, which implies that border disputes are solved in ways so that the involved actors derive a benefit by solving the dispute, suggests why Baluchistan is not its own separate entity. Obviously, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran gain nothing by losing their Baluchi provinces. They share a common benefit in keeping their respective Baluchi territories (see map 11 below).



The Soviets, by virtue of their geographical position, would gain from an independent Baluchistan, for its three occupiers are historical cornerstones in containing Russian expansion. Logically, one would not expect the United States to jeopardize its relations with the other states in order to win favor with Baluchi separatist nationalists. This forces Baluchistan to seek aid elsewhere. Policy analysts have felt that

the Soviets might try to aid in creating an independent nation of Baluchistan out of the three nations, thereby giving the Soviet Union access to the "Persian" Gulf. Since Baluchistan would be a Soviet creation, and at odds with Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan, it is rationalized that it would therefore be a Soviet client. However, the Soviet Union has not actively yet promoted Baluchi separatism. The case of Baluchistan illustrates how the states of the Northern Tier are drawn towards the United States (or other Maritime Core states) in order to survive against a common geographical foe, the U.S.S.R. For the Maritime Core, the Northern Tier is the first wall of defense against Soviet expansion. It is the single most contested area in the Middle East between the Heartland and the Rimland. The common fear of the Soviets shared by the Maritime Core and the Northern Tier states has allowed the Western alliance (Maritime Core) to dominate the Soviets in this region.

### 3.2

#### Greater Syria

In contrast to the Northern Tier, the states comprising Greater Syria have major territorial boundary disputes. This is attributed to the history of the region. Unlike the Northern Tier whose nations have existed for some time (the major exception being Pakistan), the nations of Greater Syria have only been in existence since World War One at the earliest, and even then they were only mandates of the League of Nations. One can divide the Arab states into two types, monarchies or military bureaucracies that overthrow their respective monarchy (the

exception to this rule is Lebanon which will be discussed later).

During WWI, with promises from the British, the Arabs within the Ottoman Empire rebelled against their Turkish overlords. The promise seems to have been the prospect of their own independent nation, Greater Syria, which was to include modern day Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Israel, and the occupied territories. In short, the Arabs were betrayed, and found themselves divided by the French and British into several mandates. The forerunners of modern Iraq and Jordan were ruled by two branches of the same royal family, while the French (who cared not for royalty unlike the British) divided their territory of Syria into Syria and Lebanon. Lebanon was a gerrymandered territory which was to be 51% Christian and encompass half of the Syria coast. (This way, the French could control Muslim Syria's coast since the small Lebanese state, which was barely Christian in majority would seek continual French "protection"). Today within the region, Syria and Iraq claim the right to be the leader of Pan-Arabism. Syria claims the right to all of the former Greater Syria and thereby has border disputes with all of her neighbors (including Turkey). Iraq has border disputes with Kuwait and Iran, along with Syria. Disputes between Iraq and Kuwait stem from Iraq's desire for greater access to the "Persian" Gulf.

On the Iranian side of the Iran-Iraq border, where Iran's oil fields lie, is the Arab province of Khuzestan. Writes one cartographer:

The Arab demand in Khuzestan is still for autonomy, not independence, and it is inconceivable that any Iranian government would willingly give up the source of Iran's wealth, but arrogance emanating from Tehran and Qom

through 1979 might push the Arabs' demand higher, in which case it might become difficult for Iraq to simply stand and watch.<sup>48</sup>

Tragically, the cartographer's observation came true. Aside from the Palestinian question, this border is the most disputed in the Middle East. Middle Eastern alliances change as the balance of power changes.

In choosing an ally, the United States would most likely select Iran over Iraq due to its common border with the U.S.S.R. (which Iraq doesn't have), its superior size and population, and its large sea coast, which controls about half of the "Persian" Gulf. Historically, since independence, the Soviet Union has been the friend of Iraq, which is an enemy of Iran, which was an enemy of the Soviet Union under the Shah. Now that Iran is neutral in the cold war, one could count on Iraq becoming more neutral due to its conflict with Syria which is also Soviet backed. Already the King of Saudi Arabia has visited Baghdad in early 1989, mending past differences. As stated earlier, the Maritime Core allows its member nations to pursue their own policies, hence the U.S. could be Libya's adversary, while Italy, an American ally, was Libya's friend. Iraq's major trading partners are France, Italy, Japan, and West Germany while Syria's are Italy, Romania, the U.S.S.R., the U.S., Iran, and Libya respectively. The Syrians are as much an enemy of Iraq, as Iran is. This leaves Iraq with an interesting choice, to befriend the superpower aiding its enemy Syria, or the one aiding its foe Iran with arms during the "Persian" Gulf war . When one looks at Iraq,

<sup>48</sup>David Downing, An Atlas of Territorial and Border Disputes, (London: New English Library Limited, 1980), p.42.

one notices that recently (since the overthrow of the 'pro-western Iranian Shah) it has not been extremely dependent on Soviet arms but instead has been diversifying its sources by buying also from the Maritime Core. This allegation is backed up when one remembers the major weapons scandal of 1989 involving the West German companies building chemical weapons plants in Iraq (and Libya). Along with the West Germans, the French also have aided the Iraqi military machine. The French nuclear plant built in Iraq (which was subsequently bombed by the Israelis) would have given the government in Baghdad the ability to produce its own nuclear arsenal. We can see Iraq's<sup>49</sup> leaning toward the Maritime Core, if not toward the United States.

Syria's multiple border disputes include Israel, Lebanon and Jordan. The dream of a Greater Syria is too appealing for the Assad regime to abandon. In the early 1970's, the Syrians supported the Palestinians in attempting to overthrow Jordan's king. The Syrians then invaded Jordan, only to find that the Israelis—enemies of the Palestinians and Syrians—would aid Jordan if Syria did not retreat. Syria retreated. This result at first seems amazing, but then the realities of the strategical balance of the Middle East would not have been ready for a Syria (with an annexed Jordan) allied with the Soviet Union within striking range of not only Israel, but the other (less defense oriented at the time) ally, Saudi Arabia.

In strategic terms, Lebanon and Israel are quite important. Together they comprise about 3/4 of the former Mediterranean coast of

<sup>50</sup>Sometimes during this paper, trading partners of some of the states being discussed will be listed. On the surface this means

Greater Syria. Lebanon controls Syria, if it is supported by a great power such as France did earlier, for its proximity to Damascus, the Syria coast, Aleppo, etc. makes it strategically important in neutralizing Syria. Unfortunately for the United States, Lebanon's continual civil war has made it impossible to establish any concrete policy there.

As mentioned earlier, technology is a key part in determining geopolitical power. No nation within the region comes close to Israel in that respect. Thanks to its hostile environment, this state economically and militarily is dependent on the United States. It has been estimated "official U.S. aid appropriations for Israel now amounts to \$2.5 billion for the 1983 fiscal year."<sup>50</sup> When one includes what the U.S. has promised Israel by treaty with regards to oil supply agreements and aid to Egypt (which takes the place of all the money Egypt lost from Arab donations for signing the Camp David Peace accords) the sum increased "if ever implemented, (to) as much as \$10 billion per year."<sup>51</sup>

nothing more, but taking history into account with the "Zollverein," the Hanseatic league, and the E.E.C., economic relationships have a tendency to suggest with whom a nation's interest lie, and also have a tendency to influence and reflect its foreign policy. This is done because it is nearly impossible to tell who a nation's allies are by statistics, especially in the Middle East where there is so much secret diplomacy. An example would be using the U.N. vote on recognizing Israel to determine who is pro American in the region. A nation such as Saudi Arabia would damage its prestige among its fellow Arab states if it voted so, so it will not. Meanwhile, the Saudis, who are a conservative, anti-communist, staunch American supporters in the region, are defined as anti-American. Hence, this paper uses few statistics since they really can not show the dynamics of U.S. building.

<sup>50</sup>Thomas R. Stauffer, Middle East Problem Paper. (Washington: The Middle East Institute, 1983), p.5.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p.5.

The question sometimes arises whether Israel is truly worth the American subsidy involved in this alliance. Seen from a geopolitical view the U.S. Middle East policy is primarily designed to deter the Soviet Union.

President Ronald Reagan has continually emphasized that Israel, with the most effective army in the Middle East, is vital as a deterrent to possible Soviet aggression and thus essential to America's national interests.<sup>52</sup>

Israel's existence as a strong pro-West state is in the national strategic interest of the United States in its quest for containment. In any major confrontation with the Soviet Union in the Middle East, over oil or for any other reason, Israel could be seen as a key defense point for the U.S. It could serve as a supply depot, a refueling base, and provide tactical support for the American military force. "Israel's own military capabilities could be pooled with those of NATO or the United States."<sup>53</sup> This is what the United States is paying so much for. It would be hard to believe that America's generals have forgotten the terrible price paid when the amphibious assault on Normandy took place. In essence, Israel is seen by many policy analysts as America's beachhead in the Middle East.

### 3.3

#### The Arabian Peninsula

Saudi Arabia is the core state in the Arabian Peninsula. Its

<sup>52</sup>Philip L. Groisser, The United States and the Middle East (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), p.181.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., pp.182-183.

moderate monarchy has set the pace for peace in that subregion. While the states of "Greater Syria" clamor for war in order to right past wrongs, Saudi pragmatism keeps the region calm. A good example would be when the oil dispute between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia in the Neutral Zone between their borders did not prove too difficult a problem to solve because both countries could share the potential wealth. The Saudis have also ceased their earlier claims on the Yemens, Oman, and the United Arab Emirate territories. This moderating of Saudi political behavior has made the nation, along with its enormous wealth and pro American policy, a keystone in U.S. policy in the region.

If Israel has been America's most loyal friend in the region, Saudi Arabia has been a close second. America has returned Saudi goodwill on many occasions such as with the sale of AWACs to Saudi Arabia in the early 1980's, and in helping her ally Kuwait secure passage through the "Persian" Gulf during the Iran-Iraq war. The large U.S. naval force there also protected Saudi shipping. Of course, the United States was looking out for its own strategical interests as well in doing the Saudis these favors. In the wealth oriented Maritime core/militarist Heartland dichotomy it is easy to see why the oil-rich Saudis have chosen the West. Under Saudi dominance, with oil wealth of their own, and with their vastly superior geographic size (see map 12, p.46.), the rest of the "Arabian Peninsula" states, with the exception of South Yemen, have followed similar courses of policy and are quite friendly towards the Maritime Core, if not the U.S. South Yemen's isolation from the rest of the Arabian Peninsula can not be properly explained by geopolitics by itself. History reveals that the Maritime Core and Saudi



Arabia have attempted to annex or dominate it, thus the little state developed a Marxist ideology to combat its regional foes.

#### 3.4 The North African Region.

The African region of the Middle East can be divided into two halves: those within the Maghreb, and those not. The states of the Maghreb include Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and Mauritania. The states not in the Maghreb are Libya, Egypt, and Sudan. Due to the geographical distance separating the Maghreb states from the Soviet Union, they are relatively in the Western camp. It is true that colonial days have left bad memories of the French with the Algerians, and other North African states. However, when one looks at who Algeria's principal trading partners were in 1988, one sees the U.S., West Germany, France and Italy respectively. This pattern is similar among the other north African states. Algeria is aligned economically with the West.

Algeria's chief rival has been Morocco, and within their historical border dispute (see map 13, p.61.) rests the core of the problem. Recently, the border dispute was reopened when the Moroccans annexed Spanish Sahara and the phrase "Greater Morocco" was heard in Rabat's corridors of power.<sup>54</sup> "Greater Morocco" rests on dubious historical claims to areas which include Morocco, western Algeria, Spanish Sahara, Mauritania and parts of Mali.

Morocco has had its hands full with the Polisario, the independence

<sup>54</sup>David Downing, An Atlas of Territorial and Border Disputes, p.62.

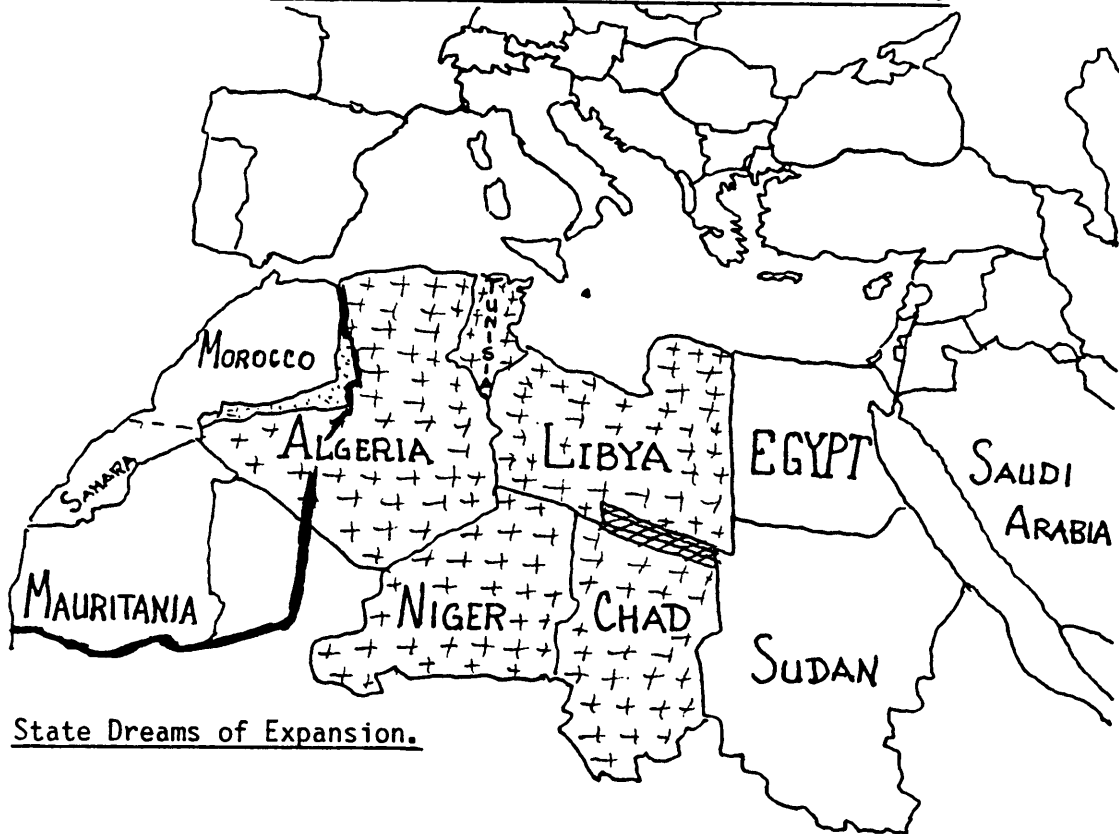
fighters in Spanish Sahara. In the late 1970's international interest in the conflict wasn't merely passive. The French Air Force, operating from Mauritania in the winter of 1977-78, carried out numerous strikes against the Polisario."<sup>55</sup>

By 1979, the U.S., along with Egypt and Saudi Arabia, was supplying Morocco with aid. Libya and Syria, on the other hand were supporting the Polisario. The U.S. support of Morocco was, of course, in its own self interest. Morocco is strategically important due to the Straits of Gibraltar, one of the "bottlenecks" confining the Soviet Navy. Secondly, the area is rich with phosphates, and while Morocco's population is 25,000,000, that of the Polisario is only eighty thousand. The seemingly Soviet client state Libya, with its war with Chad has had too many problems of its own to substantially aid the Polisario. The other major reason the U.S. has in supporting Morocco is the fact that the Moroccan king is the only Arab head of state other than the Egyptians to officially meet with Israeli officials. This acceptance of a key American ally, normally shunned in the Arab world, is a sign to Washington that here is a good potential ally or at least a friend. Some may argue this was done to repair damage caused by Morocco's 1985 pact with Libya, but in reality, this pact was a Moroccan response to what they saw as a betrayal by Washington, when the U.S. failed to deliver the aid it had promised Morocco. The aid was a casualty of the Gramm-Rudman federal spending bill. When the United States finally honored its agreement with Morocco, Morocco broke its pact with Libya.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p.62.

The problem for the relatively moderate states of North Africa and the U.S. tends to be Libya. Expansionist is an understatement when describing Libya's leadership. In 1976, maps produced by Libya's foreign ministry featured "Greater Libya" which included Algeria, Tunisia, Niger, and Chad (see map 12 below).

Map 12: Border Disputes of Northern Africa.



State Dreams of Expansion.

-  = Greater Libya
-  = Libyan claimed Aouzou strip
-  = Greater Morocco
-  = Moroccan/Algerian border dispute

The Libyans have annexed a northern part of Chad, called the Aouzou strip, and during his reign, Libyan strongman Qadhafi has managed to have military conflicts with the United States, France, Egypt, and

has supplied insurgents in Spanish Sahara against Morocco. His military, which uses largely Soviet weaponry, has an air force that has many "borrowed" Syrian fighter pilots. Qadhafi, along with Syria, supported Iran in the Iran-Iraq war, unlike the rest of the Arab world. Qadhafi's actions make him a foe of the United States. Qadhafi is a Pan-Islamist, seeing himself as the head of this Islamic empire. His conflict with the Maritime Core is not economic, but ideological. Yet, the creation of a Pan-Islamic state would be a major dilemma for both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., for the relatively weak shatterbelt of the Middle East would become a major force, geopolitically challenging the Rimland and the Heartland. The United States contains Libyan plots just as it contains the Soviet Union. However, Libya is not a Soviet satellite. Instead, Libya would likely turn on the Soviets once they got big enough to act independently of Moscow, since a Pan-Islamic Empire would resent being subservient to any outside force.

The last major countries in north Africa are Sudan and Egypt. Both do not have the oil wealth that many of their neighbors have, but Egypt does have the Suez Canal. While the Sudanese civil war has kept that nation relatively impotent in regional affairs, Egypt is a major force in the area. It has the largest Arab population of any Middle Eastern state and borders both Israel and Libya. Its geostrategic and human resource potential are excellent. By making peace with Egypt, the Israelis are now free from the constant threat from the western border.

With her southern and western flanks secured, Israel has been permitted to concentrate her forces to the north and east against the PLO and Syria in Lebanon.

Even on the very day that Sadat said to the Egyptian parliament that he was prepared to appear before the Israeli parliament, Israeli jets were bombing PLO positions in southern Lebanon.<sup>56</sup>

Though the Egyptians were hardly pleased by the events, Egyptian goodwill has greatly diffused the possibility of a major Arab-Israeli conflict. President Hosni Mubarak in a speech to the Egyptian Parliament on October 3, 1982 said,

Our position must always remain in the forefront because immortal Egypt shoulders a special responsibility in defending security and peace in the area. Egypt is the basic factor in establishing stability and balance.<sup>57</sup>

Critical are the relations between Egypt and Israel if a major war is to be avoided within the Middle East.

The different subdivisions of the Middle East are crucial when attempting to implement geopolitics in the region, for each region is different from the other when observed by the superpowers within the context of their respective economic and military needs. The Northern Tier provides a potential buffer zone between the Soviets and the West, while it acts as the cornerstone of containment for the West against the Soviet Union. The Arabian Peninsula and North Africa are economically as well as strategically important to the West, but

<sup>56</sup>Robert O. Freedman, ed., The Middle East Since Camp David (London: Westview Press, 1984), "Egyptian Policy," by Louis J. Cantori, p.179

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p.171.

relatively inconsequential to the Soviets as a buffer zone. Greater Syria is the core of conflict within the Middle East, where the superpowers and their clients wrestle for primacy within the region.

## Chapter IV

### The Heartland-Maritime Core (Rimland) Conflict Within the Middle East: The Middle East within the Framework of Geopolitics.

#### 4.1 An Explanation for the Soviet-American Middle East Rivalry.

Now that the Middle East has been successfully subdivided into geopolitical regions, a dynamic explanation showing how the superpowers act according to the concept of geopolitics is now in order. Cooperation between the Maritime core and the Heartland occurs within the Middle East when both sides believe the balance of power will shift to their mutual disadvantage. A united Islamic Empire within the Middle East would be as much of a threat to Soviet domination of the area as it would be to American domination. The Soviets and the Americans work together to ensure that such a force does not come into existence. This also implies that not only the United States, but also the Soviet Union have a vested interest in seeing that the Arabs do not unite into a great power or single political block. Balancing the power between the two opposing sides (Arabs and Israelis) is therefore a must for both superpowers, for if one becomes too strong the needs of both great powers will be in jeopardy. While the Americans can be accused of trying to maintain a balance between the Arab and Israeli sides (as in allowing the Egyptian Third Army trapped on the Sinai by the Israelis to receive supplies), one can say the same of the Soviets. "The Russians do not oppose the existence of an Israeli state...they have never (in contrast

contrast to the Chinese) denied Israel's right to exist."<sup>58</sup> Arab critics, especially the Saudis, argue that the U.S.S.R. has been one of the forces making it possible for Israel to survive.

Since (the war) 1967 the U.S.S.R. has allowed Jews to immigrate to Israel. Such immigration is seen as a form of military support to Israel, given that many of the Jews involved have militarily usable skills and are of military service age. Not only the Saudis but also Iraq and Libya raise this issue, and it serves to offset the impact of Soviet arm sales to the Arab world.<sup>59</sup>

Geopolitically, what Moscow wants is a stable defensive border.

While for the Arabs the Palestine issue is, at least officially, the central question in contemporary Middle Eastern politics, this is not so for the Russians. They see the balance of East-West relations and the protection of Russian security as more important than local disputes, however volatile or agonizing the latter may be.<sup>60</sup>

As noted earlier, the Soviets expand for defensive purposes, creating buffer states (i.e. Eastern Europe) between themselves and potential aggressors, unlike the capitalistic West, which expands economically wherever it is able. The Northern Tier's border areas

<sup>58</sup>Fred Halliday, Threat from the East? Soviet Policy from Afghanistan and Iran to the Horn of Africa, (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1981), p.72.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p.77.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p.75.



are the most crucial to the Soviet Union's defense. The pragmatic Soviets could not care less if the Europeans and the Americans economically dominate the Maghreb. By the same token, the Soviets get paranoid when the U.S. arms states on the Soviet border (i.e., Turkey and Iran). While it is America's goal to contain Soviet expansion as close to the Soviet border as possible, it is the Soviets' goal to have at least one state between themselves and their traditional foes from the Maritime Core. For the Soviets, this is the most important part of their Middle Eastern agenda. It is proposed by Halliday that

the initial Russian advance in the Arab world, the 1955 arms deal with Egypt, was designed not to enable Nasser to defeat Israel but to give support to Egypt and thereby undermine the Baghdad Pact (which Iraq had formed with Turkey, Iran and Pakistan, the key nations of the Northern Tier) which Dulles was establishing at the time.<sup>61</sup>

One cannot blame the Soviets for wanting to see such an alliance dismantled. After all, how would the United States feel if Mexico, Cuba and Jamaica formed an alliance with the Soviet Union?

Also, if one takes into account that the enemy of one's enemy is one's friend according to Middle Eastern thought, one would conclude that if the Soviets lost the Northern Tier to the Maritime Core, it would stand to reason that the Soviets would seek allies to undermine the Maritime Core. The subregion of Greater Syria provides many states which have grievances with the Northern Tier. Greater

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p.75.

Syria has its grievances with the other two subregions as well as within itself. An example of a conflict between Greater Syria and the Arabian Peninsula would include Iraq with Kuwait respectively. The Syro-Egyptian conflict is an example of a Greater Syrian state feuding with a North African one. The Soviets surely knew that by aligning themselves with the radical states of Greater Syria (Syria and Iraq), they were conceding the rest of the Middle East to the Maritime Core. This alone should indicate that the Soviets are more concerned with keeping their borders secure than dreaming of dominating the Middle East as does the Maritime Core.

The key American objectives in the Middle East are to protect its and the rest of the Maritime Core's economic interests, and while some of that interest is trade, the crucial Maritime Core concern is the Middle East's oil. There are three major geo-strategic necessities required to secure the continual flow of oil to the West: 1) Open seas to transport the oil from the Middle East to the Maritime Core: 2) Countries to sell the Maritime Core the oil: and 3) Bases to be used in order to defend a threat to either of the previous two geostrategic considerations. All three of these necessities are vital in ensuring continued economic prosperity for the West.

Open seas to transport oil imply free travel on and between the various Middle Eastern bodies of water. Most strategic are the Straits of Hormuz, Gibraltar, Bosphorus, Dardanelles, and the Suez Canal in this transportation of petroleum. This places value on maintaining good relations with Iran, Turkey, Egypt, Oman, and Morocco. The major oil producers in the area are Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Iraq, the

United Arab Emirates, Iran, Algeria and Libya. The two areas within the Middle East that the Maritime Core can seemingly count on using as bases in the event of a threat to the oil flow or to an oil producing nation are NATO's Turkey and western oriented Israel, (Israel has already aided the West once in securing the Suez Canal in 1956).

American options for keeping straits open are rather limited. The U.S. can make mutual agreement with the states controlling the straits (such as supporting Morocco's claim to Spanish Sahara, thereby gaining its goodwill) or keep the straits open by force (such as with the naval expedition during the Iran-Iraq war, which is quite expensive). Obviously, the former is preferable to the latter, and so it is in the interest of the United States to pursue understandings and alliances with the above mentioned states that control the waterways.

As for the nations which supply the oil, the United States need only be on good terms with some of them, for their vast numbers allow them to be played off against one another. Another O.P.E.C. oil embargo seems unlikely due to the tension between such states as Libya and Saudi Arabia, and the dire need for Iran and Iraq to obtain money to rebuild their war torn countries, which would seriously hamper a united policy against the West. However, Saudi Arabia must be considered crucial for an alliance with the United States because of its immense wealth, vast oil reserves, and great influence over other Gulf states.

A successful American strategy for alliance building in the Middle East includes keeping the Soviets out of the Northern Tier states and away from any access to the "Persian" Gulf and the Aegean Sea. In other words, agreements with Turkey, Iran and Pakistan are most

desirable for the United States, if its foreign policy is one of containing the Soviets, which has been shown to be the case. The most strategic countries in the perspective of the West then are Turkey (due to its being a potential American military base by being a member of NATO, its strategical straits and by being a Northern Tier state), Israel (because it's a high tech marvel and a potential U.S. military base), Iran (because it controls the strategical Strait of Hormuz and is a Northern Tier state), Egypt and Morocco (since they control strategical waterways), Pakistan (because it is a Northern Tier state), and Saudi Arabia (because it's the single largest and most important oil producing state, with large coastal areas on the strategic Red Sea and the "Persian" Gulf). Soviet domination or control of these states, or of parts of them (i.e. Baluchistan), would threaten the sea lanes of the Maritime Core and would be a severe blow to Western economic domination in the region.

The above implies that since these states are most important, the main regional foes of these states are expendable and recognized as diplomatic casualties by the United States. This would suggest that Iran would be chosen as an ally before its arch-foe Iraq, by the United States. If the United States concluded that an agreement with Iran was not possible, its best course of action would then be to remain truly neutral in the Iran-Iraq dispute. Siding openly and fully with Iraq would push Tehran in Moscow's direction. Also implied is that while the United States must be neutral in such a conflict so must its regional supporters. The strong Saudi support for Iraq has alienated Iran, and though this might not be enough to push Iran into the Soviet camp,

it is enough to make it even more suspicious of the West. However, it must be admitted that historical Western behavior, most notably of the American CIA, as well as religious and cultural dislike since 1979, has done more to make Iran suspicious of the West than Saudi Arabia's friendliness with Iraq.

#### 4.2 A Summation of the Strategic Goals of the Superpowers.

The Soviet Union's needs in the Middle East on the whole are less than those of the United States. Its geographical needs are not as large as those of the United States, for its major concern is simply to neutralize the Northern Tier. The Afghan buffer state is important to the Soviets, for it keeps Pakistan away from the Soviet border. A neutral Iran is the best news the Soviets have had for years in the region. The Soviet Union's association with Syria and Libya should not be seen then as anti-Israeli, but as anti-Turkish and anti-Egyptian. Libya, in other words, is useful as an ally to neutralize Egypt; Syria, through the eyes of the Soviets, is not important because of its conflict with Israel but because its military presence makes the Turks think not only of their northern border, but of their southern one as well.

The present political alliance system within the Middle East is a victory for both the Soviet Union and the West, for each has what it needs in a geopolitical sense. This does not mean it won't change, it probably will quite suddenly. However, the crucial states for the West (Turkey, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan) and those for the Soviet

Union (Syria and Libya) will most likely remain allied with their traditional superpower patron, or at most become neutral. (It should be noted that Pakistan and Turkey put geographic pressure on Iran to remain neutral, and that India through its friendship with the U.S.S.R. puts pressure on Pakistan to remain with the West and China for security reasons despite the Soviet departure from Afghanistan).

Smaller states may align themselves with one of the superpowers in order to offset the threat posed by a neighbor. One may ask why Jordan remains pro-Western, when one considers the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the long-standing enmity between the two. The reason for this is that Israel does not threaten Jordan's existence as does Syria with its goal of annexing Jordan; hence, alliance with the West is preferred. Algeria sees Morocco as the lesser of two evils also, when it compares its dominant border dispute with Morocco with Soviet client Qadhdhafi's claims on all of Algeria. Such alliances with the West can easily be altered if the offending states (Syria and Libya) change their policies.

The Soviets quite possibly prefer their allies to be this radical, since the radical behavior of these states alienates the West's Middle Eastern allies. This in turn prevents the allies of the West from changing over to the Soviet side, thus helping to ensure the West's security. Any dramatic Soviet gain or a gain by a regional client would create an imbalance of power as well as economic insecurity for the West. An insecure West would be more likely to confront the Soviet Union than a secure West. This would lead to a greater chance of military confrontation between the two sides. Therefore, gains in the

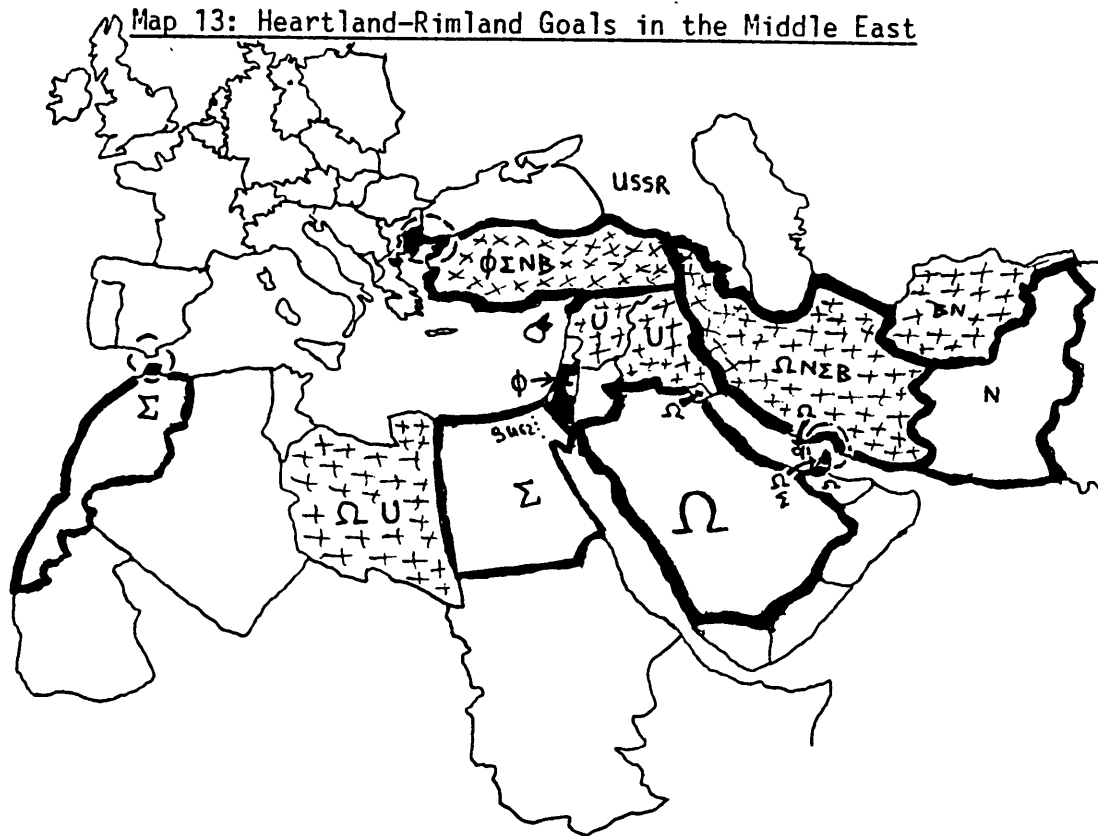
the Middle East could create for the Soviets more military insecurity on the southern Soviet flank (and everywhere else in the world), which is not only undesirable for the Soviets, but exactly the opposite of what they seek. The acquisition of Libya and Syria as allies should be seen as defensive Soviet gains.

The basis of the Heartland theory states that the Rimland (or parts of it) must be kept out of the control of the Heartland power(s) if the Rimland states are to maintain their economic independence. By observing the Middle East from an American geographical perspective, one sees that when the U.S. searches for allies in the region it prefers to have those states as allies that exhibit the ability to contain Soviet expansion into the area. Most importantly, the U.S. wants supporters who border on the Soviet Union, thus preventing the Soviets from gaining access to the sea. Besides wanting to contain the Soviets, the Maritime Core wants to protect the oil in the region from Soviet domination and the potential Soviet blackmail of shutting off the Maritime Core's energy supply.

Just as geopolitically important to the Maritime Core are those states which control key geographical features that regulate the supply of oil to the West. A good geographical example would be the Suez Canal. Since most states in the region have border disputes, the Maritime Core and its military leaders have been forced to concede the loss of some states as allies to the Soviets. However, since the Maritime core has many powerful states, economically speaking, the different members can play the good cop, bad cop routine. In this fashion, the United States can be feuding with Libya, and yet on the

other hand Libya's major trading partners are Italy, West Germany, Great Britain, France and Spain. This economic power of the West over the Soviet Union gives it a clear advantage over the Soviets.

Map 13: Heartland-Rimland Goals in the Middle East



States Vital to the U.S.S.R. = [x] States Vital to the U.S.A. = [ ]

⌑ = Border State

Φ = (potential) Military Bases

Ω = major oil producers

U = States undermining Western  
hegemony

N = Northern Tier States

(Σ) = Strategic canals & Straits



## 4.3

A Summation of Geopolitics.

Geopolitics on a macroscale does explain the conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States for it corresponds with the goals of the Heartland/Rimland struggle for world domination. Throughout its history, geopolitics has promoted containment policy, which the United States has adopted. It can therefore be argued that American policy is based on geopolitical containment theory, thereby making geopolitics the foundation for American policy formation and not an objective analytical approach to study power relations between the world's political entities. However, it should be remembered that this approach was developed in Europe before World War II. Historically, this means that the theories on containing the Heartland's expansion had been formed before the U.S. filled the power vacuum abandoned by the devastated forces traditionally responsible for containing Russian expansion. In other words, the Americans are adhering to a foreign policy that is remarkably similar to a geopolitical pattern that was observed long before they became the major political force containing the Soviets.

Though the two superpowers have different strategical needs, they both seem to have attained them in the Middle East. This does not mean that they both will not try to continue to play the game of political one-upmanship on one another. What does seem to be important, however, is that it is the needs of the superpowers that shape the alliances. A counter argument is that the Middle Eastern countries pick their allies. Due to the large number of oil producing states, as compared to the limited number of superpowers, it is clear that the superpowers enjoy

enjoy the advantage of picking allies, when one adapts the basic "supply and demand" theory of economics to politics. This theory simply states that the less of a desirable commodity there is, the more valuable it is. Conversely, the more of a desirable commodity there is, the less valuable it is. In terms of building alliances, those countries that are more influential (or valuable) set the terms of the relationship. Hence the superpowers are more influential in building alliances because they have so many states to choose from for potential allies than do the small states of the Middle East, who have only two superpowers to pick from. Also, the seeming advantage that the oil producers have is nullified when one considers that the Middle Eastern states are as dependent on western markets as the West is on their oil. Finally, using Morocco as an example, it is not Morocco that decides it wants to be an American ally and thereby receive American aid, but rather it is America that decides that it wants free passage through the Strait of Gibraltar, and thereby gives Morocco aid in order to gain Morocco's support. This point is furthered when one takes into consideration that Israel wanted American support in the 1950's when America was officially neutral in the Arab-Israeli dispute, and the United States refused to give it. It was only after Israel's neighbors became increasingly pro-Soviet that America decided to give it a commitment. This should more than ever strengthen the argument that superpowers and their needs dominate alliance building.

The geopolitical dynamics of alliance building clearly show that it is possible for the United States to have both Arab and non-Arab allies. This immediately contradicts the arguments that American foreign policy

foreign policy is determined by orthodox and ideological interpretations of Middle Eastern power shifts. It is also easy to see that political ideologies play little part in qualifications to be an American ally. The four key U.S. allies in the Middle East include democratic Israel, monarchist Saudi Arabia, and the military- bureaucratic governments of Turkey and Egypt. The fact that Saudi Arabia (which doesn't recognize Israel) and Israel are both allies of the United States shows how the geopolitical needs of a superpower, and possibly of the lesser countries, take precedence over the historic feud between these two dominant Middle Eastern nations.

Finally, it has been shown that the Rimland (Maritime Core)/Heartland model for geopolitics accurately reflects the power shifts between the world's regions. One can conclude that since the superpowers (and the U.S. Maritime Core allies) set the rules for international alliances, then the Middle Eastern states are subject to those rules also. Hence, the Middle East is as subject to geopolitical interpretation as is the relationship between the superpowers. In short, geopolitics provides a realistic model for explaining the policies of the world's states.

The one major failing of analyzing world power shifts by geopolitics is that it assumes that each state acts rationally. Historically, one can see how Haushofer rationalized that Germany needed the Soviet Union as an ally. The Nazis, being the fanatical slaves to their ideology that they were, invaded the Soviet Union instead, bringing an end to their insane dreams of power. The senseless and barbaric annihilation of Europe's Jews, Slavs, Gypsies, etc., also made

no geopolitical sense. This irrationality can not be analyzed by geopolitics. The reason is that geopolitics is meant to study the relationships between states and does not take into account ideologies that run counter to rational geopolitical objectives among the world's states.

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